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FEATURE STORY

The BRASS VOICE

by

JACK BECHDOLT

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THE EDITOR.

THE BRASS VOICE

by Jack Bechdolt

CHAPTER ONE

THE voice that sounded over sleeping Brooklawn this June night was nothing human. Only a throat of brass was capable of producing such bloodcurdling noise, a noise that climbed in waves into the still ether and penetrated to every corner of the prosperous village and far into the countryside beyond.

In the timbre of the note was a peculiar, resonant, raucous vibration that clamored at the ear and waked the soundest sleeper with his pulses hammering. It had that queer, strident hoarseness that has spoken of danger since the days when some caveman, watching for foes from a high crag, first sounded a warning on a ram's horn.

The noise began as a mutter and a growl. It climbed up the scale with a fiendish deliberation, as though the beast that made it enjoyed every second of fright he gave.

Roughly it went like this:

Grrrr-ohohohohohoh - owowowowowow-eeeeeeeeeeeeee!

Then it descended the scale again, "Eeeee - owowowowowow - ohohohohohoh-grrrrrr!" dying to a faint mutter before it renewed the clamor with vigor unabated.

If one could have stood in a high tower overlooking the silent village he would have seen, here and there, lights flashing up. He would have heard the bang of windows opening and neighbor calling to neighbor. He soon would have heard feet pounding along the cement pavements and a police whistle shrilling. Within five minutes he could have seen all the male portion of Brooklawn's three thousand inhabitants who were not halt, lame or blind pouring out of their homes and bringing most of their women folk with them.

At half-past two o'clock Brooklawn slept like a long-buried Pharaoh. At twenty-five minutes of three the place was wide awake and boiling with excitement.

Through the tree-shaded streets of the pleasant town where folks were shouting from the street to each other and to those who had contented themselves with thrusting heads out of bedroom windows, the news was going from mouth to mouth, the same news everywhere.

"The bank!" was the universal cry.

"It's the Brooklawn bank! They're trying to rob the bank! Bank! Bank! Bank! Somebody's breaking open the bank!"

Neighbor called to neighbor: "It's the bank, Ed. Got your gun?"

"Hey, that's right! Get a gun, everybody. It may be a gang of 'em!"

White, night-robed figures ran out here and there and held back the adventurous husbands and brothers and fathers.

"I'm a-goin', I tell you!"

"John Roberts, you shan't stir a foot off this block!"

"Doggone you, leggo my shirt! I'm goin'! Somebody's busting into the bank!"

"Over my dead body will you stir a foot!"

Then scornfully from the man: "Oh, for God's sake! Ain't you got any shame running out in your night clothes for the neighbors to see! Lemme go!"

Children added their shrill voices to the uproar. Small boys whooped with delight, as if this were better than the dawn of an old-fashioned July 4. Babies squalled.

And over and above all this noise, an unceasing accompaniment to it all, the demoniac voice clamored, "Grrrr-ohohohohowowowow-eeeeeee!"

In its hundred years of peaceful existence Brooklawn had never known such a night.

CHAPTER TWO

A MYSTERY OF THE NIGHT.

EVERY soul in Brooklawn with an ear to hear knew that midnight voice.

The Brooklawn bank had added this modern electric burglar protection only a few weeks previously. One noonday after the town had been amply notified through the local paper the alarm was tested and Brooklawn had a chance to become acquainted with the growling, howling, screeching, demoniac siren which would tell it if ever any person tried to break open the bank vaults unlawfully.

It was such a siren as was used during the late war to warn of air raids. Once heard its clamor could never be forgotten.

The Brooklawn bank had but recently gone under new management. Death had brought changes in the board of trustees. Young men took the places of their elders. The spirit of the institution changed.

The most notable change had been the retirement of Cyrus Bloom, the aged president, and the choice of Ralph Cotes, a business man whose home had been in Brooklawn since birth. Cotes was not yet thirty. It was said he was one of the youngest bank presidents known. He was also one of the chief stockholders.

Cotes had renovated the Brooklawn bank in many ways. There were new marble and bronze counters and cages, a newly added savings department for the benefit of the workers in the local mills, even a pleasant little room for the use of women customers. His greatest innovation had been to install the new electric siren alarm. Now the Brooklawn bank boasted that once it was closed for the day no person could so much as touch one of its windows or rattle a doorknob of its doors without advertising his unlawful presence to the entire town. Up to this eventful night, except for its one noonday demonstration, the brazen voice had remained silent.

Brooklawn responded to its first alarm with all the enthusiasm of a volunteer fire department at its first fire.

In his modest story-and-a-half cottage in the south end Chief of Police Fred Bunce, who was also day patrolman, heaved 245 pounds of bulk upright in bed with a bounce that threatened to break the bed springs. Chief Bunce reached automatically toward the chair which held his clothing. A moment later he was shaking Mrs. Bunce by the shoulder and bellowing at her ear, for Mrs. Bunce was hard of hearing:

"Ma, where's my pants?"

Mrs. Bunce waked slowly. Finding herself rudely roused by her husband, dimly aware of some unearthly noise, she leaped to the conclusion that the house was burning. She left the bed with a bound and made for the spot where she kept the family teaspoons.

Chief Bunce followed, clamoring for his pants.

"They're on the chair where they belong to be," Mrs. Bunce said snappishly when she was finally aware of the gist of her husband's remarks.

"They ain't on the chair! You took 'em to darn that hole when I went to bed!"

"Good gracious, so I did! Well, let's see!"

"Let's see be blowed! Somebody's robbing the bank, and I ain't got any pants to wear!"

Said Mrs. Bunce with emphasis: "For Pete's sake hold your tongue, Fred. Let me be and I'll think back to where I laid 'em. Only be quiet!"

Chief Bunce, clad in a shirt, stood first on one leg, then the other, holding his breath and his temper as best he could, while his wife pondered and the bank's siren howled.

More fortunate as to wardrobe was Ralph Cotes, the young president and reorganizer of the bank's affairs. Cotes was dressed and out of his newly completed home on Woodlawn drive within five minutes of the first mutter of the alarm. He had a smart little car in his garage, but being a young man and not long from a track athletic's career in his university, he scorned the car and sprinted for his place of business as though an international championship depended upon him.

Ralph Cotes was young and very much in love. In fact, he was about to be married to the most wonderful girl in the world, Rose Rowland, who lived with an aunt in the old Rowland mansion on Woodlawn avenue, and the marriage was set for the evening following this night of alarm. It was only human therefore that, though he sprinted with the speed of bad news, Cotes should slacken his pace just a little to glance at Rose's home as he neared it.

Several lights had sprung up in the Rowland mansion, and as Ralph passed its entrance he collided head on with a man who was dashing out of its shaded driveway. Their bodies met with an audible thud, and each clung to the other for support while they gasped for breath.

"Ford Markman!" Ralph exclaimed.

The older man to whom he clung nodded, breathing hard.

Professor Ford Markman of New York was a family friend of many years' standing of the Rowlands. He had dandled Rose on his knee when she was a tiny girl and allowed her to steal his old-fashioned gold watch, which was more than any other living person could boast, for Ford Markman was a noted detective, unofficially connected with the New York force, and the knowing pickpockets and crooks avoided him as they would leprosy.

Ford Markman had been invited by Rose to attend her wedding. He had only arrived in Brooklawn that evening. Though he was a much older man than Cotes, the about-to-be bridegroom, Markman had dressed and sprinted into the night as fast as Cotes when the bank's burglar alarm began to growl.

Cotes wheezed a question dear to his heart: "Rose?"

"Rose is all right. Up and dressed. It's the bank, isn't it?"

"Come on!" Cotes cried and was off again, Markman in his wake and keeping up nobly despite the years that had turned his hair an iron gray and forgetful of the dignity those years had lent him.

Just as Cotes and Markman came in sight of the Brooklawn bank the fiendish clamor that had wakened the village stopped as abruptly as it began. The brazen voice gave one last, dying growl and then—silence.

In the silence a murmur of voices could be heard from a group which had gathered across the street from the bank. These first arrivals, in various stages of hurried attire, had dashed to the bank at top speed just as others, whose voices and footsteps could be heard in the distance, were now running. When they neared their goal visions of a desperate, armed gang looting the vaults lent caution to their heels, and they collected at a safe distance to stare at the handsome little granite building.

The usual night lights were burning in the bank. There was no outward sign of anything unusual about the building. Doors and windows were closed as usual, the shades left open to expose the interior to the gaze of Brooklawn's night patrolman. No suspicious person or vehicle was near the building.

Virgil Larrimore, Brooklawn's night policeman, and the other half of Chief Fred Bunce's force, appeared on the scene at this

moment. He was a tall, rangy, bony man with a bristling mustache, addicted to the secret vice of taking a nap in the engine-room of the town waterworks. Soothed by the rhythmic chum-chump-wheesh of the pumping engine, Virgil had remained deaf to the alarm siren until the night engineer had heard and awoke him.

Though he liked a nap, Virgil was a brave man and had an audience to inspire him. He dashed for the building with revolver ready. Ford Markman and Ralph Cotes followed him.

Inspired by this example, most of the hesitating crowd came running at their heels.

"You go around to the rear and watch the alley, officer," Markman directed as they approached the bank door. "Some of you men go with him. Mr. Cotes and I will open the front door. Be ready to shoot if you have to, but don't do it without cause."

The crowd only needed some person to direct it. Markman's assumption of that rôle came easily and without question. Virgil and a dozen supporters hastened to the alley at the rear of the building. Ralph Cotes fitted his key to the bank door.

"Got a gun?" he asked of Markman, pausing before he threw the door wide.

"Good Lord, no! Never carry one if I can help it. There are plenty of guns here."

Ralph grasped his pistol ready and, throwing wide the door, sprang into the bank. Markman was beside him. Their supporters hesitated at the door, and there was a general edging away from the open panel. If a fusillade of shots was to follow this invasion most of the adventurous ones of Brooklawn were ready to hunt cover.

No fusillade followed.

The bank was empty, serene, orderly.

The clock ticked on the wall. The hooded lights left warm pools of color over mahogany desks and bronze and marble fittings.

The bank's tortoise-shell cat, hitherto undisturbed by the unearthly siren, awoke at the invasion and left her cushioned chair, yawning and stretching luxuriously.

Seeing the advance guard had done its work without resistance, the volunteer posse at the door burst in noisily. They overflowed the place, and for five minutes the bank swarmed with them. Every corner was examined. All agreed that nothing had been touched. The vault was safe and the time lock unmolested. There was no window tampered with nor door disturbed. There were no mysterious footprints nor fingerprints except those speedily contributed by the explorers. There was nothing wrong anywhere, and yet the burglar alarm had most certainly been set off. There were plenty of witnesses to agree to that.

Markman and Cotes examined the alarm system. It was intact. So far as inexpert eyes could judge it never had been disturbed. A test was followed by the instant growl of the siren on the bank roof—proof that there was no short-circuit in its wiring.

Virgil Larrimore sent a messenger from the rear alley to report no sign of danger there.

Ford Markman turned about and addressed the citizens of Brooklawn, who all the time had been arriving in increasing numbers until the small bank was packed and the air getting close.

"Everything is safe, gentlemen," Markman announced. "Mr. Cotes says the vault has not been tampered with, but to make doubly sure he will have the currency checked over just as quickly as the doors can be opened. Thank you for your help, gentlemen, and now we must ask you to give us room and quiet to finish our investigation. The danger, whatever it was, is past. Go home to bed and don't worry."

With shuffling of feet and much talk the men of Brooklawn began to seep slowly through the bank door to the street. A shout from one of them caused a sudden halt and alert attention.

"Hey, Cotes! Here's something! Look at this!"

Cotes and Markman pressed toward the speaker and found themselves the centre of attention.

"I guess we all overlooked this," said the speaker, Virgil Larrimore. "Looks like a letter for Mr. Cotes."

Everybody gazed at the policeman's find, a legal size envelope. The envelope was addressed to "President Cotes, Brooklawn Bank." The address was printed with lead pencil and the envelope itself had been fixed prominently above the paying teller's window by thrusting its ends between the grillwork.

"Funny nobody saw it," Virgil remarked. "Shows we were all in a sweat looking for crooks." He handed the letter to Cotes.

Amidst murmurs of "Must've been there all the time! Shows somebody was rattled not to find that! Some detective, Virgil Larrimore!" and the like, Ralph Cotes tore open the sealed envelope. An inclosure was produced. Cotes read its message amidst breathless curiosity.

Those who watched saw that Cotes made a great effort to display no emotion. He handed the message to his friend Markman without comment.

But the young man's face had paled and flushed suddenly. His hand shook slightly. He drew a deep, slow breath and turned his gaze on Markman. In his look was distinct apprehension.

Every man of Brooklawn present at the moment knew that Ralph Cotes was frightened by what he had just read.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WARNING.

DETECTIVE FORD MARKMAN took the letter Cotes handed him.

The elderly man glanced quickly over the message printed in lead pencil on cheap wood pulp paper ruled with pale blue lines.

Markman's seamed, wrinkled face and twinkling, humorous eyes gave no sign he was reading anything extraordinary. He stood before the curiosity-inspired crowd, a plain, old-fashioned gentleman in baggy, black clothing, starched white linen and limp black string tie, and read the announcement as casually as a banquet toastmaster who has just been handed a telegram stating that the president of the American Federation regrets he cannot be present in the flesh, but is with the diners in spirit.

"Very interesting," Markman remarked coolly and folded the letter and dropped it in his coat pocket.

His action was a distinct disappointment to the crowd. Somebody with less polish than the rest voiced the universal desire, "Say, don't we get a look in?"

Markman smiled and shook his head. "Sorry, but not to-night. It's the sort of letter any cheap, anonymous coward who can afford pencil and paper writes to bank presidents."

"Well, gosh! Is it from the crook himself?"

"I really can't say. But I very much doubt it. And it has no bearing upon the case. Now, gentlemen, if you please, we must have quiet and room to work!"

The crowd took the hint reluctantly. As the last man filed out of the front door Chief of Police Fred Bunce, whose wife, by thinking back methodically over the varied catalogue of the day's activities, remembered finally where she had laid his pants, arrived breathless from the south end. Being the chief of police, Bunce was admitted and Virgil Larrimore was allowed to remain.

The crowd lingered outside the plate-glass window. There had been too much excitement to allow Brooklawn to return to anything so prosaic as bed. Brooklawn was determined to make a night of it. When Markman, Cotes and the two policemen sat themselves down at a desk under the bright lights and spread out the mysterious letter between them, there were plenty of faces pressed against the plate glass, eyes watching with unwinking stares.

Markman noted the audience and maneuvered Cotes into a chair which left his back to the window. He gathered the two policemen close about him as he displayed the letter.

They all read it over together:

"Your bank is a joke to me, Mr. Ralph Cotes. I can get in and out whenever I feel like it. Just to prove what I say I'm coming back to-morrow night and clean out

every cent you've got in the vault. Expect me at 8:30 p. m., the time you will just be getting married to Miss Rose Rowland. I'll break you flat! Be warned!"

"'Can you beat it?" Chief Bunce gasped. "Whoever he is, this crook's got nerve, telling us just when he'll be back again."

"Well, I guess he's got the police force of Brooklawn to reckon with if he tries that," Virgil Larrimore said grimly.

The chief chuckled with equal grimness. "Well, I guess he has! We'll give that chap a reception he'll remember!"

"On my wedding night!" Cotes cried. "This is some damnable conspiracy!"

Markman spoke: "It's nonsense, arrant nonsense! It's a cheap threat, that's all. Cotes, you're a fool if you think about this twice. I only showed this to the officers in order to give them all the information in the case. Somebody with a poor sense of humor has played a practical joke on us. Somebody set off that alarm from outside by forcing a window or door or dislocating some wire."

"The letter was inside," Larrimore insisted. "How about that?"

"Inside—*when you found it!*" Markman reminded him. "Can you swear it was there when we came into the bank?"

"Swear it? How can I? I was in the alley. How do I know what you saw—or what maybe you didn't see in the excitement!"

"Looks darn mysterious to me," Chief Bunce summed up. "Pretty—darn—mysterious. But there are crooks as smart as that! Crooks that can get in and out of a locked bank. You ought to know, Professor Markman!"

"I know one," Markman admitted grudgingly. "Just now I think I know where he is—safe in a New York State prison."

"Maybe he escaped," the chief suggested hopefully.

Markman shook his head. "Maybe; I doubt it. Meantime as I see it, there is just one real danger threatening this bank." He gestured significantly toward the crowd outside. "Nobody must breathe a word of this to them. Not a word!"

"Oh, sure," the chief agreed. "You hear, Virgil? Don't say anything about this case."

"Shucks, I never talk about official police business! Nobody ever heard me talk!" Virgil declared indignantly. Markman looked doubtful, hoping devoutly that Virgil spoke the truth.

"Then you must check the money in the vault, Ralph. That must be done at once to reassure the public."

"It can't be done until 8:30 to-morrow morning. The time lock won't open until then."

"That's so! But when it's done see that the local paper and everybody else hears the result. There's nothing more for us to do except leave the bank to the excellent care of these officers and go home to bed. Come along, Ralph! We'll stop at the telegraph office and ask the alarm company to send an expert to look over that wiring. Then to bed."

"Bed!" Cotes exclaimed. "What a chance I've got to get a night's rest. And my wedding to-morrow; no, to-day, now! Damn it, Markman, how can I go through with that with the fear that the very moment we're standing before the minister some crook is robbing the Brooklawn bank and ruining me!"

Ralph Cotes's face was pallid.

Markman knew that the young man had invested all of his resources in the Brooklawn bank. The bank was his pride. He labored toward its success twice as hard as the hardest working employee in the institution. It was his career. Whatever would happen, it threatened his very existence.

Markman led his friend out of hearing of the policemen. "You must go through with it," he said sternly.

"I—I doubt if I can! Markman, we'll have to postpone the wedding. Rose will understand."

Markman shook his head. "No. Impossible! In the first place, Rose must not know a word of this. Nobody must know. Nobody must have any reason to suspect that we fear any person can get into your bank when it is closed. Such a rumor,

spread about by unthinking people, would at once upset the public confidence on which the entire banking business is built. A story like that, spreading from mouth to mouth in this town, might develop a run which would ruin your bank in a day! For that reason alone not even Rose must be told."

"But this is awful!"

"And for another reason I expect you to go through with this ceremony, Ralph. A reason even more urgent——"

"And that——"

"Because you claim to love Rose Rowland? You do! I thought so. I ask you, then, can you postpone your wedding at the last moment? Can you insult the woman you love by admitting that the safety of mere dollars—a business enterprise—is more to you than your marriage? Ralph, Rose is a proud girl. She has been courted by plenty of suitors."

"Oh, lord, yes! A hundred, anyway."

"You were pretty lucky to win against that field! But let me tell you, no woman is won until the knot is tied! You've not won Rose so surely yet! You don't dare risk offending her pride, her natural pride in your love and impatience, by putting off this wedding!"

Ralph Cotes bowed his head.

"You're right," he murmured. "The wedding must go ahead!"

CHAPTER FOUR

ROSE ROWLAND.

MARKMAN turned into the Rowland home and Cotes came with him, "Just to reassure Rose that everything's safe," he explained.

Plenty of lights testified that the occupants, like most everybody else in Brooklawn, were up and about, though it was nearing 5 o'clock in the morning. The men's approach was noted, for the door burst open and Rose Rowland herself ran out to greet them. "Ralph!" she cried reproachfully. "You might have asked me to come along with you, I think! I had to stay home and miss all the excitement just because aunty was afraid to go out; afraid of robbers! You might have stopped in to ask me if I wanted to go, anyway!"

"But, Rose, dear, I thought the bank was entered! I couldn't stop to explain just then, and it might have been very dangerous. Fortunately——"

"Oh, yes, I know! Heard it from the neighbors. It was just a false alarm!"

"Yes, thank God!" Ralph Cotes wiped his pale face.

"Well, anyway, I don't think you played fair not taking me to the first exciting thing that's happened in Brooklawn since I can remember, do you, Professor Markman?"

"I never take sides in a quarrel between man and wife—or engaged couples," Markman evaded diplomatically.

Rose Rowland was a pretty young woman, blonde and spirited. Her looks alone were enough to have left her pretty well spoiled by attentions at the age of twenty-three and the fact that she inherited the large Rowland fortune made her doubly sought after by all manner of suitors. Rose looked upon the midnight alarm in Brooklawn as something of a social event—something exciting and novel—in the nature of a horserace or a bullfight. Ralph Cotes's apologies and explanations apparently did not entirely soothe her, for after Ralph had gone, as she passed Mrs. Keller, her aunt, and Markman on her return to bed, Rose observed: "Ralph thinks entirely too much about his old business. He gets all wrapped up in it and forgets other people and their interests. I'll cure him of that when we're married."

"Still," Markman argued pacifically, "if somebody is apparently robbing you of your money a man must be expected to show some slight interest."

"Money!" Rose sniffed scornfully. "That's it, money! There are things in the world more important than money—graceful, gentle, pleasant things, like considering other people's happiness. That's the curse of our American men; they're money mad."

"It's darn lucky for our American wom-

en that they are," Markman thought. But he thought it and did not say it.

Mrs. Keller, Rose's aunt, sighed as she prepared to follow and soothe the bride-to-be. "Rose never seems to have forgotten that Captain Adams Quinn! He used to talk that way."

"You mean the titled English fellow who wanted to marry her?"

"He wasn't titled. Just a younger son."

"But, after all, she chose Ralph."

"Yes, thank goodness! An American husband is plenty good enough for an American girl! But until two months ago it looked as if it were Quinn. My goodness, but Quinn was mad!"

"Cut up by her refusal?"

"Madder'n a pet cat! I guess it was a shock to him. And she still talks those silly ideas of his! Well, we must allow for her. Rose is spoiled."

Markman was heartily inclined to agree with Mrs. Keller. Yet he confessed himself a victim of Rose's charms, for Rose could be a very charming young woman when she chose.

The vaults of the Brooklawn bank were examined with care that morning, their contents checked to a penny. Remembering Markman's advice, Ralph Cotes saw that the news got wide publicity.

An expert from the burglar alarm company came to examine the alarm. He pronounced it in perfect order. Daylight examination showed no traces of an unlawful forcing of doors or windows or any sort of tampering with the building.

These items were all of exceeding interest to Brooklawn, but the most interesting news of all was that concerning the mysterious letter to the bank's president left by the marauder inside a locked and barred building which showed no traces of having been entered. The fact that Cotes would not make public the contents of this letter made it a doubly interesting bit of gossip and food for speculation. Several versions of the true nature of the message spread among the gossips, and in a way they were not so far from the truth, the gist of them being that the midnight intruder had made a threat which scared the bank officials half to death.

The directors of the bank met, heard a full report of the events of the night and agreed there was nothing to do except offer the customary reward for news.

Between these business worries and the state of mind of a young man with an engagement to be married at half-past eight that evening, Cotes spent a day of excitement.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FATAL WEDDING

ST. PETER'S Church of Brooklawn was one of those perfect little village places of worship, a brick structure, seventy-five years old, its walls covered with ivy and creeper. That night its stained glass windows shone like rich rainbows, and from its doors a river of warm orange light flowed forth and was swallowed by the rich blackish blue of the night.

Everything was ready for the appearance of the bridal party. The ushers had been busy this past hour seating invited guests for the most brilliant wedding the village would see for years. The gallery of the church had filled.

The interior was fragrant with flowers which were everywhere and the perfume of women's gowns. The organist was seated and waiting his cue to begin the wedding march.

It lacked one minute of half-past eight o'clock.

Beneath the decorous, holiday manner of the audience of guests, invited and uninvited, a tremendous excitement seethed. The air was charged with it. It was more than the happy excitement of a wedding.

Somehow, in some way, word had gone from mouth to mouth through the town that afternoon. Somebody had hinted to somebody else, and thus it had spread that the mysterious invader of the Brooklawn bank had threatened to return and rob its vaults at the very moment the bank's young presi-

dent would be standing at the head of the aisle waiting to claim his bride.

Interest in Ralph Cotes's wedding to the Brooklawn heiress, already great enough, at least among the women of the town, had been intensified by this rumor to something near frenzy. Never had a wedding been performed under such stress of excitement, such nerve-racking suspense.

The ushers, decked in wedding boutonnieres, showed it by their pale faces, their abstracted air, their blunders as they greeted and escorted the guests. The guests showed it by their more than wedding-day breathlessness. The women's eyes were bright with it. The men breathed hard.

At exactly the correct quarter of an hour before the time set Cotes had arrived at the church with his best man, Lon Kerrigan, the cashier of the Brooklawn bank and his very good friend. Clad in wedding finery, wearing dull-white buckskin gloves, boutonnieres in their lapels, the two men had entered the side door leading to the vestry and waited there now.

Cotes looked like a man about to go to the electric chair rather than a bridegroom. At times he seemed so overwhelmed by his excitement he was scarcely conscious. And yet, like some skillfully made automaton, he attended to all the nice details of a perfect wedding. But all that he did and said had the air of being done and said by a man who was sleep-walking. His white face was without expression. His eyes had a far-away abstraction in their look.

Nor was Kerrigan much better.

Several times Kerrigan had essayed this rôle of best man and done credit to himself. Now he devoutly hoped he would never again see a church or smell of bridal roses. The strain of this night was more than mortal flesh could bear.

At one minute past the half-hour exactly automobiles bearing the bride, her aunt and Ford Markman and the bridesmaids reached the church. The party entered the vestibule where Cotes's parents waited. The groom's mother was escorted to the first pew on the right-hand side of the church. The senior Cotes followed her. The head usher returned to the vestibule and reappeared with Mrs. Keller, Rose's aunt, and escorted her to her place on the left, and Markman followed. The usher then returned to the vestibule to take his place in the bridal procession.

It was the exact minute, the "curtain cue" of that matrimonial drama dear to all feminine hearts.

It was also the moment which would prove the truth or falsehood of the rumors that had been circulating about town all day.

The organ began the wedding march, triumphant, swelling chords that quickened every racing pulse.

And as if this was its cue the brass demon on the roof of the Brooklawn bank, for the second time within twenty-four hours, released its hoarse, strident shout of alarm and all Brooklawn gasped with terror.

Above the Lohengrin music came that raucous scream that climbed from mutter to shriek:

Grrrr - ohohohohohoh-owowowowowow-eeeeeeeeeee!

Eeeee - owowowowowow-ohohohohohoh-grrrrrrrrrr!

Here and there a man sprang to his feet with a loud exclamation; then, remembering he was in a place of worship, subsided hastily.

A woman screamed, and those about her tried hastily to hush her clamor.

In the gallery there was a stir of feet and persons could be heard running down the stairs and out of the church.

The organ strove nobly to compete with the burglar-alarm siren. At the top of its volume it continued to pour forth Lohengrin music, but above its best the brass voice was plainly heard.

The doors of the church vestibule opened. The bridal party came on, nothing daunted.

The bridesmaids first, then the maid of honor alone, then at a little distance Rose Rowland on the arm of Detective Ford Markman.

Rose Rowland's face was whiter than the lace veil that hedged it. Her lips were compressed and her bosom rose fast with hysterical breathing. Mechanically she moved to the regular strain of the wedding march,

though that march could not be heard above the demoniac racket of the brass-throated siren on the Brooklawn bank.

It was Rose herself who in this terrible moment of indecision had given the word to go on.

The burglar alarm at the bank was a challenge to Brooklawn's heiress. She took up the gauge.

Rose had come to church to be married. Let Ralph Cotes look to it that he did his part!

That was her attitude.

The capricious girl imposed her will on those about her.

Like puppets they marched at her word.

And then, while Brooklawn gaped, too late they saw that there would be no wedding.

The clergyman had entered the chancel.

But the bridegroom who should await her there was missing.

At the head of the aisle Rose Rowland turned. With head held high, walking like an outraged empress, she left the church without glance to right or left.

Pushing past the friends who sprang toward her from every side, she kept her fingers on Markman's arm and obliged him by sheer, unspoken force of will to clear a way and escort her back to the waiting automobile, Rose's own car, brought up by her chauffeur, a wedding car with tires newly painted in white, its driver decked in new white gloves and wedding boutonniere.

Rose Rowland stepped in, Markman beside her.

"Drive us home," Markman ordered.

The car sped through Brooklawn streets almost unnoticed by the crowds that were running pell-mell toward the bank.

And nothing could be heard but the strident, bloodcurdling shriek of the electric alarm.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SIGN ON THE DOOR.

AT the first shriek of that alarm Ralph Cotes had jumped to his feet. He burst out of the church vestry, Kerrigan at his heels, and the two men ran for Cotes's car. Top-hatted, in wedding garb, they leaped in and drove off.

Fast as they were, others, a considerable crowd, had reached the Brooklawn bank before them. There were some in Brooklawn more intent on watching to see if the bank was entered again than if Cotes was married. They had lingered near the little granite building which had that day been placed under guard of the two policemen and six special officers imported from the city.

When Cotes drove hastily to his place of business the crowd was collected before the bank door. The guardians of the building were noisily trying to drive them back.

The siren had ceased to shriek.

The centre of attention appeared to be the main entrance to the Brooklawn bank. As he pushed his way through the crowd Cotes saw that something white had been fastened to the door. Instinctively he knew that another message had been posted.

It was about this message—rather a proclamation—that the curiosity seekers of Brooklawn crowded despite the attempts of the police to keep them off.

The paper was a fairly large sheet of light wrapping stuff. It had been pasted against the handsome oak door, and the paste was still moist.

Cotes directed that it be peeled off and had it carried inside.

But at least fifty of Brooklawn's citizens had read it by this time, and the original fifty were busily telling all the new arrivals what it said.

At his own desk Cotes read it over.

"CITIZENS OF BROOKLAWN

"If you have any money in this bank, look out!

"These modern burglar alarms are a joke to me. I was in the bank last night. I came in again to-night.

"If you want to know how much I got out of the vault ask Cotes; he probably won't tell you!

"If you want to draw out your money, better be on the job early to-morrow morning.

ANON."

The special police and the local force reported hurriedly. They had surrounded the building since closing hour. Two men stayed on watch inside.

All agreed that nothing unusual had happened. No suspicious person loitered near the bank. Everything was locked and barred. The building and the neighborhood had remained peaceful as a graveyard until exactly one minute after 8:30 o'clock. Then the burglar alarm began its ghastly wailing.

As nearly as it could be reckoned the alarm had kept up its clamor for ten minutes. The guards had rushed from place to place, seeking an open window, a disturbed door or the presence of any intruder. They had found nothing. Then the crowd collecting before the front of the building had brought them out, and they had begun dispersing them and discovered on the panel the anonymous warning.

As for the bank, all swore that not even a mouse had broken in. The contents of the vaults were intact.

"I knew it!" Cotes cried bitterly. "I see it now! It's a plot—a plot to ruin me and ruin this bank. How it was done, God only knows, but the mischief has been done. Everybody in town will know about this message left on the door. Everybody with money in this bank will be on hand to demand it in the morning. Well"—Cotes drew a deep breath and his face grew grim—"they'll get their money, all of them, every cent we owe."

Cotes ceased speaking, for at that moment Ford Markman entered the bank. The bank president rose and rushed toward him. "Rose?" he questioned eagerly. "Is she—has she—— Markman, for God's sake, tell me everything!"

Markman drew the young man aside. "Rose," he said gravely, "is suffering a great shock. Your desertion is the worst blow the girl has ever been called on to bear. She rode to her home with me without saying a word, grim, hard with anger. Then her aunt came and she collapsed. What woman wouldn't under the circumstances, and remember, Ralph, Rose is a proud, much spoiled woman."

Cotes broke in with a groan. "But, good heaven! What could I do? The bank—my responsibility for other people's money—that comes first."

"And naturally Rose insists that your responsibility for her happiness comes first. Ah, don't think I judge you! I don't set myself up as a judge of anybody. I'm only telling you things as they are. And Rose is angry, will be hard and unrelenting, or I miss my guess—and with what she considers very good reason."

"I must see her at once," Cotes exclaimed.

"Not to-night, Ralph. She is under a doctor's care. He has administered a sedative to give her sleep, relaxation. It was absolutely necessary."

Cotes sat down in a chair and buried his head in his arms. Several times he groaned and writhed like a man in mortal anguish.

"Markman," he said hoarsely, raising a haggard face to the older man, "you're a detective. You have solved bigger mysteries than this, I'm told. If you have an ounce of friendship for me—for Rose—find out who has done this thing, why it was done, and let me deal with the coward who did it to me!"

Markman smiled. "I am trying to find out," he said. "My dear fellow, I've been at work on the case since I reached the bank last night. I telegraphed for a trusted operator before we went back to bed. He reached here this morning and is at work."

"At work now!" Cotes exclaimed.

"Yes, but keep that secret. I shan't even show you the man lest you give it away by unusual attention to him. But you may be sure I'm trying to help you, Ralph. For that matter," Markman chuckled, "the case should be fairly simple. Who and why? Those are the two questions to be settled. I think I'm reasonably sure of the answer to the second. If I'm right in that the second will answer the first. Meantime, Ralph, prepare for a run on your bank. You have the resources to meet it?"

"I think I can get them. I'll give every cent I've got before one person to whom this bank owes money to shall have the right to say the debt is unpaid."

"Well, I may be wrong, but if I'm a judge

of human nature, you'll need every last cent," Markman predicted gravely.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TROUBLES

MARKMAN was a true prophet. There was a small crowd waiting before the doors of the Brooklawn bank early next morning.

News of the insolent proclamation by Mr. Anon, who claimed to be able to enter the locked and guarded bank at will, was all over town, and not only all over town, but all over the country, for the newspapers, already deeply interested in Brooklawn's bank mystery, printed the proclamation in full. Ralph Cotes was not in a position to deny its existence, therefore he did the best thing and made a clean breast of the facts for publication.

After that Cotes's declaration, backed by his cashier, that the contents of the vault had not been touched was of little avail with suspicious minds.

Citizens of Brooklawn were touched in a most tender spot—the pocketbook. Particularly those employees of the mills whose stake of a hard-accumulated savings was involved.

There were many who declared they had every faith in Ralph Cotes and his bank and pointed out the folly of a rush to withdraw savings, but it is hard for the man or woman who has put by a hundred dollars or so only by self-sacrifice to think of that little fortune lying at the mercy of a thief who can come and go at will, and these began the run. After that force of example drew in others until even the most determined of the level-headed began to worry.

The money went out of the Brooklawn bank in a steady, deliberate stream, and not a cent came in that day.

Throughout the day Ford Markman was the busiest man in Brooklawn.

The elderly detective was pursuing his own line of investigations, about which he kept his counsel.

In addition he made it his business to advise many worried depositors on the folly of their panic.

Markman also got in touch with powerful financial friends in New York and pulled every avilable wire to strengthen the credit of the threatened bank.

And added to these other activities and cares the detective found himself the go-between for Ralph Cotes and Rose Rowland. Ralph insisted he must see Rose. Rose swore she would not exchange a word with the errant bridegroom. And each poured forth a vast amount of incoherent, excitable emotion on the defenseless head of the elderly messenger, who was fond of both and almost as much harrowed in his feelings as they were.

Added to this the day proved hot for June, and Markman actively disliked hot, muggy weather.

At three o'clock, just as the bank's doors were being closed with more than usual promptness and a disappointed crowd of depositors were venting their feelings in nasty remarks about Ralph Cotes and his affairs, Markman came wearily to Cotes's desk, sank into a chair and began wiping his moist face and hands.

Cotes faced him much as a waiting prisoner watches the faces of the jury about to pronounce its verdict.

Markman nodded wearily. "Yes, she consents."

Cotes was out of his chair with a bound and reaching for his coat. The young man's brown hair was rumpled, his face white and tired, the dark eyes bloodshot and ringed with black.

"Wait!" Markman bade him. "There are conditions——"

"Any conditions! I've got to see Rose."

"She holds out no hope at all. She will never forgive you!"

"She must hear me out!"

"She will hear you out. She understands you come only to offer your apology, to confess yourself in the wrong."

"Any humiliation she asks of me, if only——"

"But there is no *'if only'* implied in her

terms. Frankly Rose is looking for vengeance. You can't blame her."

"But if I can just talk to her——"

"Don't rely on that too much. And the interview must be in the presence of her aunt and myself, so your opportunity to persuade her is slight."

Cotes started and looked alarmed. "Well," he said gloomily, "at least she'll listen to me."

Markman looked a little doubtful of even that.

They found Rose Rowland and her aunt, Mrs. Keller, waiting them in the shaded, formal drawing-room of her home. Amidst the stiffness of mid-Victorian furniture Rose, pale, hard-eyed, stiff, looked as unsympathetic as a figure of marble. The stout little lady in shiny black silk sitting close beside her, patting Rose's hand nervously, looked terrified.

Ralph Cotes stood before Rose with head hanging.

Mrs. Keller and Markman would have withdrawn, but Rose signified by an imperious gesture that they must remain.

"Rose!" Ralph choked on the name. Finally he managed to articulate: "Perhaps I am entirely in the wrong and inexcusable. I must tell you that I am heartily ashamed and apologize as sincerely as I can. I feel I am not fit to stand in your presence."

Rose answered him when a long silence indicated he had no more to say or could manage to say no more.

"You were entirely in the wrong," she said coldly, measuring her words with care. "You deserve to be as heartily ashamed as you are capable of being. You broke your promise to me, you humiliated me beyond any reckoning before everybody I love. I have heard your apology and I am glad you have the decency left to make it. Good-by!"

She stood up then, and indicated her intention of leaving the room.

Ralph cried hoarsely: "But say you forgive me. Say that you——"

Rose said very distinctly, though her voice was low: "I do not forgive you. I never shall. Good-by."

She turned away and went toward the door. Ralph sprang after her. "You must listen to me, Rose! If I humiliated you, if I insulted you beyond repair, I had good reason. My honor as a business man——"

"Business!" Rose's lips formed the word soundlessly, and she smiled with acid bitterness.

"My responsibility to hundreds of people in this town whose money is in my keeping!" Ralph argued hotly. "Is my honor nothing? Could I be worth your love without it? I am pledged to guard the public's money. I can't break my word to them! I can't!"

"Keep your word to them!"

Rose's voice grew stronger. Hysterical anger made it like a blow in Ralph's face.

"By all means, Ralph Cotes, keep your work to *somebody!* I am glad you are capable of that much decency."

"But can't you understand—forgive——"

Rose raised her hand to force his attention. "For the last time," she said, "listen and understand me. I can never forgive you. Your insult goes too deep for that. This is the last word between us."

She walked hastily from the room, and Mrs. Keller ran after her.

Ralph Cotes lingered, standing as she had left him, overwhelmed. It was Markman who kindly counseled him to leave the house.

"You must give her time—a great deal of time," the detective said. "In time, if she truly loves you——"

Cotes shook his head.

"You don't know Rose as I do!" he exclaimed. "This is the end."

CHAPTER EIGHT

MARKMAN'S REPREHENSIBLE CONDUCT

MARKMAN felt his position as a guest at Rose Rowland's home to be somewhat uncomfortable. He had come as a wedding guest, and now that he was involved in tragedy it seemed best he should withdraw tactfully. He explained this to

Mrs. Keller as they dined alone. Rose's aunt understood, and Markman's bags were being removed to the village hotel when Rose sent word by her aunt, begging him to remain.

"She feels that she needs you. She wants you close at hand," Mrs. Keller explained. "Professor Markman, perhaps after a little she will change her mind. Don't you think this a hopeful sign? She wants you near because you are Ralph's friend as well as hers!"

"We're dealing with a headstrong, proud, spoiled woman," Markman answered. "There's no telling what she will do. But if she needs me, here I stay!"

The second day's run against the Brooklawn bank proved worse than the first. At evening of that day Ralph Cotes made a brief, forlorn appearance on Rose's doorstep, but was sent away without hope. Ralph was showing signs that the strain he labored under was more than a man could bear alone. Markman watched him get into his car and drive off with a blind recklessness. He shook his head with a worried air. "Poor devil! Poor devil!"

He turned into the house, sighing deeply.

Yet that night and for several days to come Ford Markman was capable of most reprehensible conduct for a man who professed such friendship to Ralph Cotes and Rose Rowland.

After a solitary cigar Markman was about to go to bed when he discovered Rose standing at the library door.

The young woman evidently had retired for sleep, then changed her mind. She wore a silk negligee and her hair hung in braids.

"I must talk to you!" Rose whispered.

"Of course, my dear. Sit over here, out of the draft from that open window."

"It's about Ralph," Rose whispered, obeying his directions with a meekness strange to her. "I want you to tell Ralph for me——"

She hesitated and flushed painfully.

"Yes, my dear, anything you say. What is it?"

Rose's blue eyes wavered aside, ashamed to meet his gaze. Tears overflowed them and ran down her cheeks. She bowed her head in her arms. "I have been wrong," she sobbed. "I have been wicked and beastly about Ralph. I've acted like a dog—a mean, nasty, selfish yellow dog!"

Markman was patting her hand and smoothing her hair. "Well, well!" he encouraged, "we all have a strain of the yellow dog in us. It'll come out at times. What is it, honey?"

"Tell him that"—Rose sobbed—"tell him I am ashamed—I am heartily ashamed of what I said to him yesterday. Tell him—if he asks it—I forgive him. Tell him I love him! Bring him back to me!"

Markman looked doubtful. "Rose," he counseled when she had composed herself a little, "are you sure you mean this?

"I'll go to him now and tell him myself if he asks it! I'd walk to him barefoot, through miles of snow and blizzard, to make him happy again!"

"Unfortunately," Markman said dryly, "we're just out of snow and blizzards for a few months. But that does allow us time to consider your course! Rose, Ralph's insult in deserting you at the church was pretty raw!"

"He did what was right!" the girl declared angrily. Her blue eyes flashed. "He did what was honorable. He did not fail the poor people who trusted their money to him. I'm proud of what he did! Proud!"

"Deserted at the altar!" Markman mused meaningly. "Sounds like melodrama, eh?"

Rose quivered with agony. In spite of her recent declaration her face clouded. Then with terrible meekness she smiled. "I love him," she declared as if that explained it all.

"Well," Markman decided leisurely, "I'll tell the young man. Maybe it will do some good. But not to-night. To-morrow morning. He needs a little sleep. Ralph has been under a strain."

"Sleep!" Rose looked worried. "You think he is sleeping—to-night?"

"Like a baby," Markman agreed cheerfully. "I called at his house and saw him."

Rose seemed surprised, even doubtful. That Ralph should sleep at all hurt her pride. But Markman's cheery, matter-of-fact manner defied doubts. The girl added

with an effort: "But you will ask him to-morrow? Ask him to forgive me. Tell him I beg it!"

"Surely I'll have a try at it," Markman promised. "But Ralph is a pretty busy young man just now, remember that!"

"I trust everything to you," said Rose gratefully. "You understand how much this means to me!"

"I do, my dear! And go to bed now—and don't worry!"

Markman escorted her tenderly to the stair. Halfway up its flight she turned and whispered down to him: "Be sure to say that I humbly apologize. If only he will forgive me."

Markman nodded his understanding.

To himself he added: "Strikes me there's a powerful amount of forgiving being asked about here. But then it takes a lot to rub along in this world!"

Yet after this and after all his promises, Ford Markman deliberately broke his word. He said nothing to Ralph Cotes next day or thereafter, nothing at all concerning this midnight interview with Rose. He forgot it deliberately and, what was worse, lied to Rose.

Markman told Rose he had delivered her message and Ralph could not be moved to forgive her.

CHAPTER NINE

AN ANGRY WOMAN

THE depositors in the Brooklawn bank continued to clamor for their money. The golden stream flowed all one way—out of the door. It flowed as slowly as bank subterfuge could make it, the tellers exercising great deliberation in settling each account, the doors opening as many minutes after the hour as possible and closing in the afternoon with astonishing promptness, but the stream flowed and all the efforts of Ralph Cotes and the directors could not dam its current. Their attempts to slacken the tide merely inflamed the desire of excited depositors. The bank hastily converted all of its convertible assets and strained its credits to the limit. Ralph Cotes vowed that if they failed they would fail honorably, owing not a cent to anybody, and the directors backed him up in that.

Ford Markman continued to busy himself with many errands. He continued to profess himself Ralph's friend and Rose's, but he was careful to keep the two apart and to cover all trace of the duplicity that was making both so unhappy.

Amidst his other worries Ralph found time for serious doubts of Markman's detective efficiency. Markman produced no clues. He did not even promise any. He answered all inquiries with the statement that he was at work on the mystery. Perhaps he had an assistant in the village, Cotes was willing to believe it, but between them the two detectives seemed to be getting nowhere. Ralph wondered if perhaps Markman's age was not beginning to tell; if he was really the clever unraveler of puzzles he had the reputation of being. Ralph secretly meant to hire operatives from one of the big national detective agencies, but he was so busy keeping his bank afloat he could not get at it.

The evening of the second day after Markman's interview with Rose in the library that young woman appeared for the first time at the dinner table. Rose was dressed radiantly. Her eyes sparkled as of old, her cheeks were flushed—perhaps with rouge, but at least bright. She smiled gaily and kept up a lively conversation, talking more than usual, in fact, as though determined to bury and forget all trace of her recent agony.

To Markman she observed presently: "Your hostess is going to be very rude. I'm going to New York to-night—on the midnight train." She added the last with a wince and Markman knew she still dreaded the thought of being seen in public. "Aunty is going with me," Rose explained, "so you're going to be turned out of house. Do you mind very much?"

Markman declared hastily his willingness to remove on an instant's notice.

"I think the change will do me good," Rose explained. "I'm sick of sitting at

home weeping. It's not worth it! There isn't any man alive worth it! I'm done with my widow's weeds!"

"An excellent idea," Markman agreed.

Mrs. Keller looked very doubtful. "Perhaps the change will do you good," she murmured; "still——"

"That's all right, aunty; I've decided! And we'll be gay again! We'll have a regular spree. I'm going to buy oodles and oodles of new clothes and go everywhere, see all the new plays and the new dancing-dining clubs and meet a lot of handsome new men. I know at least one man who'll be waiting to greet us."

"Rose!" Mrs. Keller exclaimed, "you didn't wire him!"

"I most certainly did, dear aunt."

"Oh, Rose!"

Markman tried to maintain a politely disinterested aloofness to the exchange of glances, not very approving glances, that passed between the women. Rose turned on him for support. "Aunty doesn't approve of my meeting an old admirer—a man I almost married once—so soon after—after the recent bereavement. I do. Why not, indeed?"

"But Captain Quinn!" Mrs. Keller sighed.

"Certainly, captain, the Right Honorable Adam Quinn of the Upper Hall, Dorset Highbridge, Dorsetshire, England; isn't that a mouthful, Professor Markman?"

"A man of family, I judge," Markman smiled.

"Brother to a marquis," Rose giggled. "Isn't that lovely! And the handsomest, most romantic, really fine fellow!"

"Oh, Rose!" her aunt sighed forlornly.

"Well, I wired him, anyway. Told him we'd be at the Ritz-dorf Monday and glad to see him, so you'd better practise looking glad, aunt."

Mrs. Keller looked as if she would never look glad again.

After dinner Markman got her aside for a minute.

"There is just one promise I ask of you," he said earnestly. "It is quite possible that Rose's happiness—everybody's happiness—depends upon it. Will you promise——"

"Anything, Professor Markman."

"When Rose meets Adam Quinn——"

"That awful Englishman! Some way I don't feel that he is quite—*quite* a gentleman."

"Never mind your feelings! When she meets him say nothing, do nothing to discourage their friendship, but wire me. Telegraph me the very first minute you can get free. Will you promise?"

"I promise," Mrs. Keller agreed solemnly. She looked as if about to ask a great many questions. Markman forestalled them by hasty thanks, pressing her hand and taking an abrupt leave. If Mrs. Keller did not burst with unsatisfied curiosity he knew he could depend on her promise.

Markman saw Rose off on the midnight train. She maintained her radiant air to the last. Though there were several residents of Brooklawn at the station to meet the late express, and these recognized Rose and stared mightily during the brief moments they waited on the platform, she ignored them completely, laughing and talking a great deal.

When Markman assisted her to the Pullman Rose turned to press his hand between hers. "Good-by," she smiled, "and don't you worry about me one minute more! I'm happy and going to be happier! I'm going to have the very devil of a good time from now on—always!"

The train pulled out, and Markman turned away.

"Pride," the detective thought. "Pride! That girl has the pride of Lucifer. When I told her Ralph wouldn't come back I knew the news would either break her completely or rouse her. It roused her! I didn't make any mistake about Rose!"

The second day after Rose's departure, at noon, Fred Markman entered the Brooklawn bank.

There was no queue of clamoring depositors before the doors now. There was nobody in the bank except its employees, and these wore a dejected, dispirited, frazzled-out air, as though their sudden idleness stunned them.

Ralph Cotes was just leaving his desk.

He greeted Markman with a grimace and a shrug.

"It's over," he said huskily. "Paid the last account in full at 11:45 this morning. It's over—and so am I. I'm through. So's the bank, I'm afraid."

"Stuff!" Markman laughed. "The bank will keep on. Wait a week—or two weeks at the outside—and all your money will come straggling back to you. Within three months——"

"I know!" Cotes sank his voice. "They cleaned us," he whispered. "Every last cent. All my personal fortune on top of that. Hang on! That's all very well, if the directors can find the capital to keep it going. Perhaps they can, but I'm through as president or anything else."

"Oh, come now!"

"No. I'm so mixed up in this—it is so much my personal affair—that my name means a dead loss to this business. Well, in a way I'm glad. I'm dead tired of it—sick all through. I'll go home now and get a long, long rest."

"I'll go with you," Markman said quickly.

"I don't want you!" Cotes made the rude retort with almost hysterical violence.

"Yes, but I'm coming."

The young man laughed sourly. "Listen," he said, looking Markman in the eye, "I'm not going to blow my brains out or snuff up any gas. Nothing like that! I'm no damn fool, and I'm not even licked. I won't admit I'm licked. Not that I haven't felt like giving up once or twice, but don't think I'm *that* crude kind of a quitter. I'm going home alone, and I'll be perfectly safe besides."

"Yes," Markman agreed, "I think you'll be safe. I apologize for thinking anything different."

"That's all right. And after I get a rest I'm going to start in again and make good—somewhere. Always did want to start at the bottom. My money was left to me, you know."

"Nothing like making it all by yourself," Markman agreed cheerfully. "It's a lot more satisfaction."

"Yes. And about—Rose. Well, that's all right, too. There are other girls, I dare say!"

"Oho," thought Markman, "he has his pride, too! Pride works both ways!"

"So thanks for all your trouble," Cotes went on, "and I'll say good-by for the present."

The entrance of a telegraph messenger interrupted Ralph Cotes. The messenger handed Markman a yellow envelope. The detective read and smiled. "Ralph, I can't let you go home, after all. You and I are going to New York on the one o'clock train. When we get there you'll see what it's all about."

Despite all protests and arguments, Ford Markman linked his arm in the younger man's and had his way with him. They started for New York, and judging by the eagerness with which Markman watched him, Ralph Cotes might have been his prisoner.

CHAPTER TEN

CAPTAIN ADAM QUINN

FORD MARKMAN and Ralph Cotes came directly from the Pennsylvania station to the Ritz-dorf Hotel, and went to the lounge, where they found Mrs. Keller, Rose's aunt, waiting for them in response to a telegram Markman dispatched from the train.

On the appearance of Markman and Ralph, two other men who had been waiting about the hotel entrance drifted in their direction. One was a slight, inconspicuous man of middle age and mild expression, dressed in an inconspicuous manner. He had been looking over some new magazines at the newsstand. The second, who had been seated reading a newspaper and covertly watching the door for at least half an hour, had more of a military air. Markman paid no direct attention to either man, but as he conducted Ralph toward Mrs. Keller his hands made a slight gesture behind his back, which held the two strangers at some distance, but within easy call.

At sight of Mrs. Keller Ralph Cotes stiffened angrily.

"If this is some sentimental plot to bring me to Rose——" he began indignantly.

"It's a plot," Markman agreed, grasping his arm more firmly, "but more business than sentiment. If it works as I expect——"

"I tell you I won't see her! She said she was through with me. Well, I'm through with her."

"Ralph," Markman spoke severely, "you can be as unreasonable as you please about Rose. Go as far as you like. Just now I need you for another purpose. I need you here to witness the unmasking of the man who ruined you. Do as I say, and you'll see that man, and in such a way that I think you'll find yourself reinstated in everybody's esteem—even Rose's, if that is of any interest to you. All I want now is that you go make yourself comfortable in that big lounging chair, the one with the wing back. That will hide you neatly. Just sit there and keep out of sight until things begin to happen."

"Wasn't that Ralph?" Mrs. Keller exclaimed as Markman bowed before her.

"It was. You mustn't mind his avoiding you just now. The poor chap is feeling pretty cut up. And don't mention his being here, will you? Now, where's Rose?"

"I expect her almost any moment. She went out this afternoon with Captain Quinn."

"Will she bring him back?"

"Yes. I asked him to dine with us, as you suggested."

"Then there is nothing else but to wait," Markman smiled. But they had no waiting to do. At that moment Rose Rowland appeared and waved greeting to her aunt.

With Rose was a tall, slightly stooping and rather handsome fellow. He wore a lounge suit of rough tweeds with an air. His cheeks were browned and his blue eyes keen. A small, blonde mustache gave him a slightly foreign look.

At sight of this pair Markman made a second gesture for the benefit of the two men who were watching them. The men drew closer without ostentation.

"Professor Markman!" Rose exclaimed, her hand extended. Then with mingled pride and defiance of her aunt: "Captain Adam Quinn, Professor Markman."

Markman bowed. By this time the two interested loungers were at his side.

Markman turned to them with composure. "Two friends of mine," he said coolly. "Perhaps you know Inspector Opp of the metropolitan police, Captain Quinn?"

"Can't say that I do," Quinn murmured, with a sharp look at the military man, who merely grinned as he greeted Quinn with "Hello, Dorrity. At it again, eh?"

"And Mr. Blatch, a friend of mine." Markman included the inconspicuous man in gray clothes.

"What's this, a party?" Quinn demanded. In spite of his effort his cheeks were reddening.

"A surprise party," Markman smiled.

"If you'll excuse me, Rose and Mrs. Keller——" Quinn would have turned away hastily.

It was Inspector Opp who answered, "We will not!" with unusual promptness and, moving beside Quinn, he laid his hand on his arm.

"Sit down, Dorrity; we need you."

"What is it?" Rose exclaimed anxiously. "Professor Markman! What do you mean?"

"Mr. Blatch will explain," Markman answered, "but first let's have Ralph present. Oh, Ralph!"

Cotes emerged from the big chair and came reluctantly before them. To Rose he bowed distantly and seated himself only upon Markman's sharp urging.

"Now, Blatch," said the detective, "suppose you talk first. But let me add that Mr. Blatch is one of my ablest assistants and has been in Brooklawn since the morning the bank was first entered. He will tell you what he has found out. This is the man, Blatch?" pointing at Quinn.

"That's the one," Blatch agreed. He paused a moment, running over his story and marking the points off on his fingers.

"I came to Brooklawn to work for Professor Markman," Blatch said. "I began the morning after the bank was entered, or

folks thought it was, which is the same thing. Professor Markman had a theory which he suggested to me, and I followed it out. His theory was that the bank was never entered at all, nor the burglar alarm disturbed——"

"But, good Lord," Ralph interrupted, "everybody heard it howling!"

"No," said Blatch, unperturbed, "they didn't. They just thought they heard it."

"Well, I declare!" Mrs. Keller exclaimed, "I most certainly did hear that siren!"

"You heard *a* siren, Mr. Blatch means," Markman explained beneficently. "The idea occurred to me as soon as we discovered that the bank had not been disturbed. But the siren you heard—well, go on, Blatch, excuse me for interrupting."

"I followed Markman's hunch," Blatch began again. "I made a quiet look around Brooklawn, particularly around the bank. I asked questions and nosed into places. In the building just behind the Brooklawn bank is a lodging house. It occupies the second and third stories, the top floors. I got acquainted with some people in this house and I heard about a new arrival there. He was a man who went about town for a few days trying to sell a patent vacuum cleaner. He had several cases in his room said to contain these vacuum cleaners. I took a room next to this man's and cut a little hole through the wall while he was out. The night of Mr. Cotes's wedding I watched this chap. He had a machine in one of those cases all right, but it wasn't a vacuum cleaner exactly. It was an electric alarm siren. He hitched it up to the light circuit, and at exactly 8:31 o'clock that night he opened his window and started this siren going. It made the devil of a noise, I'll tell you! Everybody in town came running to the bank."

Cotes sprang up. "So that was it! And we all took it for granted that it was the alarm on the bank that was shrieking!"

"That was it," Markman smiled. "Go on, Blatch."

"I reported to Professor Markman, and he told me not to let this man out of my sight. I didn't."

At this moment a struggle interrupted. Adam Quinn, hoping to profit by the general attention given Blatch, had started out of the chair he had been occupying. But Inspector Opp had his arm before he had even started to leave the spot. "Sit down, you poor fool!" the inspector growled. "You're caught with the goods, and you know it!"

"After this party had made the racket with the siren," Blatch went on undisturbed, "he beat it out of his room and around to the bank. I was right after him. I saw him snake a sheet of paper out from under his coat—he must have had it all fixed with wet paste—and he slapped it up against the bank door and then ran around the block and came back again to mix with the crowd that was collecting."

"You saw this paper, Blatch," Markman prompted.

"Oh, sure! It was that announcement thing about the bank's depositors being a bunch of saps if they left their money there any longer."

"You damn scoundrel!" Ralph Cotes would have been at the prisoner's throat had Rose not restrained him. At the touch of her hand he turned in wonder, and the glance of her eyes quieted him.

"My man went home pretty soon and went to bed," Blatch resumed. "Next day he left Brooklawn early, taking his supposed vacuum cleaners along with him. I went, too. He didn't bother to reclaim his vacuum cleaners from the baggage when he got to New York. He threw the claim checks away in the train washroom, but I got them safe enough. Then he went to the station barber shop and shaved off the whiskers he had grown and got his hair cut, and spruced up. I've been on his trail ever since, and this is him!" Blatch yawned, and pointed in a bored way at Adam Quinn.

"That's a damn lie," said Adam Quinn; "I don't know what the devil you are all talking about. Prove it."

"I can prove every word of it, Dorrity!" Blatch smiled. "You know I can. I picked up witnesses all along the line—people you talked to or sat by, the barber that shaved you, everything."

Inspector Opp spoke. "And we can prove that you're just a cheap swindler who did time in Atlanta five years ago," he said. "Remember, you've been caught trying this Captain the Right Honorable Adam Quinn stuff before. This English family graft always was your long suit."

"And it almost worked in Brooklawn," Markman smiled. "This supposed Captain Quinn, in reality common swindler, passed very well in village society. Rose's large fortune was the stake he played for. And you must admit, Rose, that he impressed you! But you had sense enough to choose the man you loved, and Adam Quinn, who has the merit at least of sticking to his point, played a desperate last chance. He tried to ruin the man you love on his wedding night, in the hope of winning you, after all. Adam Quinn conceived the bright idea of duplicating the bank's burglar alarm siren. Turned loose over a sleeping town, his machine did as well as the bank's. Nobody questioned that the racket did not come from the bank itself. And he rushed into the bank with the crowd that night and left his clever warning letter for the depositors. What he did afterward you know. His whole plan was to ruin the bank without risk. He came dangerously near doing that, I'll admit. But now——"

"Oh, have it your own way!" Quinn—really Dorrity—declared shortly. "You haven't convicted me yet."

"But we will," Markman smiled as he was led away by Inspector Opp and the efficient Blatch. "We will!"

Then Markman turned to Rose and Ralph. "I lied to you both," the old detective explained. "I took a desperate course with you. I deliberately kept you two apart, seeking to drive Rose to this swindler, figuring that her outraged pride would send her back to the brilliant suitor she had given up when she accepted you. I knew Rose had been dazzled by this plausible rascal. I knew she was desperately angry when she believed you had rebuffed her advances. And my idea proved right. Rose went directly to Adam Quinn and gave me the opportunity to check up on my own theory of Quinn's motive in his bank wrecking."

Rose cried tearfully: "Ralph, can you ever forgive me?"

"Good heaven!" Ralph grinned, "I forgave you before you forgave me—only Markman, confound him and his theories, never told you!"

Adam Quinn was tried and convicted shortly before Rose was married to Ralph Cotes.

The siren of the Brooklawn bank has never been sounded since the day it was publicly tested. And Brooklawn sleeps soundly of nights, assured of the safety of its savings in the vault of Ralph Cotes's rehabilitated bank.

FINGERPRINTS CLUE IN $3,000 ROBBERY

NASSAU COUNTY, N. Y., officials declared that they expected momentarily the arrest of two men who robbed the home of William H. Allison, superintendent of the catering department of the Cunard Line, and escaped with cut-glass, jewelry and linen valued at more than three thousand dollars.

They have a line on the crooks.

Fingerprints recorded by Charles W. Hansen, Nassau County fingerprint expert, indicate that the thieves are the same who recently burglarized the homes of Joseph Gibbons, a retired business man, and Henry Holthusen, New York attorney.

When Allison returned home the other Saturday night he found evidences that the house had been ransacked. Going upstairs, he surprised a man rifling bureau drawers. Their entrance startled him.

The man jumped from the second floor window to the ground, thirty feet below. Footprints near the house showed the intruder had an accomplice on watch outside.

Phenomenal Memories

By ALBERT MASON HENDERSON

TAKE the case of Morphy given to me some years ago by a great and good man of enlarged mind, whose memory will ever be green among the friends he left behind.

Morphy, the celebrated chess player, he said, could play several games of chess simultaneously, without seeing any of the boards on which the various games were being conducted. It was certainly a wonderful feat of memory. Attention and abstraction were retained throughout—a most extraordinary feat, and one performed by him over and over again, as he used to stand alone attacking and defending himself against several opponents who were arrayed against him. That his brain at last gave way and that he died insane proves that physiology has something to say to memory.

Like every other gift, memory must be used with discretion, or else the frail frame with which the mind is associated may be shattered by overstraining and what has been the best may be corrupted into the worst. A wonderful genius may degenerate into an idiot.

An amusing instance is given by the old philosopher Seneca, the master and afterward the victim of the Emperor Nero. He tells us how, on one occasion, a poet wrote a long poem, which he read before a distinguished audience.

It was received with great applause, but suddenly, to the astonishment of the audience, and to the subsequent consternation of the author, a man started up and accused the poet of plagiarism, inasmuch as he had some time before written the piece which had been greeted with such well-deserved applause.

This claim was indignantly denied, till, in proof of his assertion the claimant recited the whole poem by heart, word for word, without hesitation, and defied the poet to do the same. This he was not prepared to do, and the audience decided that the one who knew the poem by heart must have been the author, till he frankly declared that he had never heard the poem before, but had learned it by heart while the poet read it.

So "the honors were divided," the poet gaining applause for his verses, the other for his memory.

The French critic, La Motte, is said to have played the same trick on Voltaire, who when quite a young author, once brought a tragedy which he had just composed to read over to the critic.

"It is all very beautiful," said La Motte, "but the second scene of the fourth act is copied word for word from a previous author."

And in proof, to the dismay of Voltaire, he recited every line of the scene without changing a word.

Voltaire declared his honesty, and it was only when he saw how distressed the young author was that La Motte acknowledged that he was so struck with the beauty of the scene that not a word of it escaped the tenacity of his memory.

Sir Benjamin Brodie, in his most interesting "Pyschological Inquiries," cites an instance of the celebrated Jesuit Suarez, who is said to have known the whole of the works of St. Augustine by heart. These consist of eleven large folio volumes.

How far this is literally true can never be proved, but it is stated in the life prefixed to his works that if any one ever misquoted St. Augustine on any subject of his writings, Suarez would at once correct the quotation, and give it with perfect literal accuracy.

The great thinker Pascal is said never to have forgotten anything he had ever known or read, and the same is told of Hugo, Grotius, Liebnitz and Euler. Both knew the whole of Virgil's "Æneid" by heart.

And we have all read how the Athenian Themistocles knew the name of every one of the 20,000 citizens of Athens.

The great critic, Joseph Scaliger, is pronounced by Sir William Hamilton to be the most learned man that the world has ever seen. His knowledge was certainly prodigious. He used to say to himself that he had a bad memory, but a good reminiscence. He could not learn by heart as fast as he could wish, but when he once knew a thing he could always recall it.

Yet this good man with his bad memory complains that it took him twenty-one days to learn the whole of Homer by heart; he had to devote three months to learning in like manner the whole of the remaining Greek poets, and that in two years he succeeded in getting by heart the whole of the range of classical authors. And this is what he calls a bad memory!

The most extraordinary feat of memory is one which Sir William Hamilton believes to be true without doubt, cited by him from the geographer Maretus, who witnessed it and had it solemnly attested by four Venetion noblemen of undoubted honor.

Maretus tells us how in Padua he met a young Corsican who had gone thither to pursue his studies at the university. Having heard that the young man was gifted with a most extraordinary memory, so that he could retain and repeat as many as 36,000 words, which would be read over by him once only, Maretus and some distinguished friends asked if he would allow them to test the accuracy of what report had stated.

He willingly consented, and there were read over an almost interminable list of words strung together without any consecutive meaning, in every variety of language, even many of them mere gibberish.

So long was the list, which was written down in order to give precision to the test, that the audience was fairly tired out, the only fresh one being the young Corsican himself, who stood all the while with his attention deeply fixed and his eyes cast down upon the ground.

When it was time he looked up cheerfully, and repeated the whole uninteresting catalogue of words without a single fault.

Then, to show how carefully he retained every word, he went through the list backwards, then taking every alternate words, first, third, fifth, etc., till he quite tired out and perfectly satisfied Maretus that he was the most extraordinary man he had met in all his travels.

The young man added that he would be ready, in a year's time, to repeat the task.

Of course, it is impossible now to verify this fact, but Sir William Hamilton considered it true beyond question, and did not hesitate to say so in his lectures on metaphysics before the university in Edinburgh.

THE GREAT "MUMMY-WHEAT" TRICK

THE fakers and jokers who "salt" Egyptian tombs with wheat grains for the amazement of the credulous tourist, who plants these "thousand-year-old" seeds and sees them germinate, sometimes overreach themselves; one of them used maize instead of wheat; as maize was introduced into the Old World from America, the trick was apparent. Numerous experiments with wheat seeds of authentic antiquity, conducted by such Egyptologists as Unger, show that their vitality is lost in a few years. Certain seeds, if well-guarded from moisture, are alive after ten years; even after twenty years the protoplasm of a few may retain the power of augmenting its volume by absorption of moisture, and may develop definite form, but is soon disintegrated by the influx of air and water. Germination becomes impossible in from 20 to 300 years.

The Pearl of Great Price

By ARTHUR WILLIAM BEER

LESLIE DREXEL was having trouble in making his plot work out as good plots should. At such times it was his habit to abandon his fountain pen and engage in the fascinating task of observing the pretty stenographer across the narrow street. This morning, however, as the habit asserted itself, he recalled that it had been several days since he had had the pleasure of watching her deft manipulation of the typewriter keys. Dear girl, little did she know into how many romances her slender figure had been woven while Leslie in his dingy little law office awaited the reluctant client. Some time Leslie meant to meet her. He even dreamed of what a splendid team they would make. She to supply alike inspiration for his pen and the means of dressing up the result of that inspiration attractively for editorial eyes. Perhaps together they might evolve a popular success —another *Main Street;* then the film companies would woo them; then perhaps a trip to Europe or better, the Orient or the dreamy isles of the Pacific, with articles syndicated home by the author or authors of——

But there she actually was. She was late to-day. It was nearly ten o'clock. She seemed in no hurry to remove her coat, however, nor did she approach the typewriter stand near the window facing Leslie. He saw her take a step or two toward the rear of the office, then waver and turn back. A moment later he saw, as if flashed on a cinema screen, a horrid picture. The girl of his dreams was struggling in the arms of a big brute of a man who seemed bent on overpowering her. Leslie wanted to raise the window and shout. He felt a desire to project himself in some way across the space which yawned between them; yet he did nothing but stand gripping the back of a chair and intently watch the scene across the way.

The girl was putting up a plucky fight, but the odds were clearly against her, and presently he was shocked to see her assailant dragging her form from the room.

No sooner were they out of his sight than the spell which for the nonce had rendered Leslie incapable of action was broken. It was the work of a few moments only for him, disregarding elevator service and without pausing to don hat or overcoat, to rush down the stairway to the street, one of those congested channels in the downtown district designed mainly as a passageway for merchandise-laden motor trucks. In a few moments more he had miraculously escaped destruction in the seething traffic, had raced up the stairs of the building across the way, and stood pounding at the door of a suite of offices which bore upon the glass door panel the simple legend, Ronald Dearborn, Broker. This he knew from previous investigation was the office in which the maiden of his daily meditations was employed, though hitherto he had never attempted to storm its portals.

After what seemed an interminable time the door was slowly opened. Throwing caution to the winds, Leslie entered abruptly and found himself face to face with a big, good-natured-looking man, who smiled at him inquiringly.

"Quick, quick, where is she?" blurted out Leslie.

"What do you mean?" said he of the smiling countenance.

"The girl—the man—next room—he's killed her!" gasped Leslie.

The man swung open the door to the inner room, glanced in, and then looked back at Leslie.

"Come here and explain yourself," he invited coolly.

Leslie stepped to the door and looked in. He recognized the room at once, though there were parts of it he had never been able to observe from his own quarters across the way. The room contained the usual assortment of office furniture—a typewriter stand at the window, some filing cases, a writing table with blotting pad, pen and ink, and some wire baskets containing papers, and at one end of the room a small iron safe. All seemed in order. No one else was in the room.

"You are Mr. Dearborn?" inquired Leslie.

"Correct," replied the man. "What's the trouble?"

"A few minutes ago I saw a man struggling in here with your stenographer," said Leslie.

"You saw what?" snapped the man.

"Yes, from my office across the street," explained Leslie.

The smile faded from the big man's face.

"See here, young man," he said; "in these sad bootlegging days there is a lot one must excuse. The best thing you can do is to hike home, take a good cold shower, a rub-down, and then climb into your bunk for the rest of the day. That stenographer of mine hasn't been here for a week. She's enjoying the invigorating breezes of Atlantic City just now, I hope."

"All right," returned Leslie, "but there's surely something wrong here. I may appear drunk, but I was never more sober. Will you give me the name and address of the young lady?" he added.

"With pleasure," responded the man. "Her name is Pearl Waters and she lives at Number 727 Oak street."

"Telephone connections?" queried Leslie.

"Yes, West 1896 is the number. Glad to have you call her up here, but my phone is out of order. Still think you are the victim of hallucinations or something," said the big man, resuming his tantalizing smile.

Leslie, perplexed, hesitated a moment, then abruptly turned and left the office.

He made some inquiries among the employees of the building, but without result. No one had noticed any unusual occurrence that morning, and by the curious glances with which he was met he inferred that those he interviewed shared the view of the broker upstairs that his mental balance was somewhat disturbed.

Chagrined and puzzled, he sought a telephone booth and called West 1896.

A cheerful voice promptly responded.

"Miss Waters? Why, no, sir; she's away just now. Been gone several days. Any message?"

Without waiting to reply, Leslie abruptly hung up the telephone receiver.

Returning to his stuffy little office, he attempted to resume his writing. But it was of no avail. He had a keen imagination, but he could not convince himself that what he had witnessed that morning was merely a figment of the mind.

The mystery puzzled Leslie all that sleepless night. He rose early and after a sketchy breakfast set out for his office with the resolution to obliterate by hard work what must have been merely a foolish fantasy. On his way he purchased a morning paper. A glance over the front page revealed headlines which immediately arrested his attention:

"Valuable Gems Stolen—Broker's Hoard Rifled—Victim Found Bound and Gagged."

Hastily perusing the news story he convinced himself that it referred to the office across the way. It appeared, however, that the crime had been discovered only a short time before the paper went to press, and the details were lacking. It occurred to him to go to police headquarters with his story; but what could he tell? Would his story not seem preposterous? He had seen a man struggling with a girl. He had gone over and interviewed Dearborn, the broker, and the latter had told him the girl was away, and this he himself had confirmed. Now here was a report that the broker had been

bound and gagged and despoiled of valuable gems. No mention of a girl. Why not? And what would Dearborn be doing with gems, anyway?

Leslie decided that he had better postpone his visit to headquarters until matters cleared up a bit. Sometimes witnesses who could not tell a very lucid story were held in unpleasant detention, and Leslie did not desire to be deprived of an opportunity to do a little investigating on his own account. For a similar reason he decided not to visit the broker's office for the present. The early afternoon editions would probably contain a fuller account of the affair, and he could then decide whether or not a description of what he had seen, or at least thought he had seen, yesterday would be useful to the police.

So he went up to his little office and busied himself in writing as clear an account as he could of the events of the preceding day.

No client coming in to disturb his attention, this task, interrupted by occasional fits of day-dreaming, engaged his attention until the noon hour, when he sallied forth for a bite of lunch.

At the white-tiled establishment which it was his habit to patronize when the pangs of hunger assailed him he met Harry Thorne, an irrepressible interne at the Emergency Hospital.

As usual, Harry had an interesting case to discuss. Leslie generally tried to discourage his efforts in this direction, as they usually ran along surgical lines, and his sensitive mind was not equal to the task of absorbing them, especially at meal time.

However, it appeared that this was a different case, and Harry had no sooner begun his narration than Leslie found himself a keenly interested listener.

According to Harry, a girl had been brought in yesterday who was unable to reveal her identity. She had been found in an unconscious condition in a downtown alley. With some difficulty she had been revived after reaching the hospital, and although apparently suffering from nothing worse than shock, was unable to give an account of herself, or even to reveal her name.

Leslie found himself drinking in this strange story avidly. Could it by any chance have any possible connection with the happenings of yesterday?

He was easily persuaded to accompany Harry on his return to the hospital and see the young lady.

"You know a lot of folks," said Harry, "and you may recognize her. And who knows, perhaps there may be a fee in it for you. An action for damages on account of personal injuries, or something of the sort. Anyway, she's a pretty young thing and quite easy to look at."

"And here she is," said Harry a few minutes later as they followed a white-capped nurse into a hospital room where a girl lay quiescent on a narrow bed, staring blankly into space.

Leslie watched her silently for a moment or two. Then——

"I'm sure that's Pearl Waters," he exclaimed.

"Felt sure you'd know her," said Harry Thorne, "but who is Pearl Waters, and where does she live?"

But a strange thing had happened.

At the mention of the name Pearl Waters the blank look left the girl's eyes, and she slowly sat up in bed and looked about her. Then——

"Where's my coat?" she cried wildly.

"Did she have a coat?" inquired Harry, addressing the nurse. If so, I wonder why it wasn't searched for identification marks."

"She did have a coat when they brought her in," said the nurse, "but it was all mussed up and muddy, and I don't know what became of it."

"My coat!" the girl repeated. Then——

"Where am I?" she inquired, looking about her.

The nurse stepped forward and put her arms around her.

"You're all right, dearie," she said soothingly, "and we'll find your coat. I guess they've sent it to the basement to be cleaned and pressed."

A search revealed the missing garment crumpled in a soiled clothes basket in the hall.

When it was brought to her the girl took

it eagerly and plunged a little blue-veined hand into one of its deep pockets. When she withdrew her hand it clasped a small chamois bag. Quickly untying the string which bound it, she poured its contents, a flashing kaleidoscope of unset gems, upon the white counterpane.

Leslie viewed the proceedings with mixed feelings of amazement and chagrin.

Could it be possible that she, the girl of his dreams, was a partner in this crime—a thief? No, no, it could not, it must not be.

Then presently the girl spoke again.

"They are all here," she said. "My, how very glad I am. And now," she continued, "will you please tell me how I came here, how Mr. Dearborn is? Have they captured the robbers? And, oh, all about it?"

Reassured, Leslie quickly gave her such information as he possessed, and in turn requested that she shed some light on the events of yesterday, which were yet a trifle obscure to him.

Well, it was simple enough when explained, as all mysteries are.

Her story, with certain details supplied later by Mr. Dearborn himself, was to the following effect:

Dearborn's fad, it seems, was the collection of rare gems, and these he kept in a small safe in the office room occupied by Miss Waters. She enjoyed his confidence and was one of the few persons who had any knowledge of the collection. It was quite true that she had gone on a little vacation, but upon arriving at Atlantic City, and while still at the railroad station, she had overheard two men plotting to despoil Mr. Dearborn of his jewels. She boarded the train they took and heard more of their plans. Arriving in the city, she hurried to the office to warn Mr. Dearborn, assuming, of course, that the attempt to rob the safe would not be made until some time that night. But it appears they had a different idea of the matter and had already, posing as customers, disposed of Mr. Dearborn by the time-honored method of binding and gagging him. They had easily succeeded in opening the old-fashioned safe and had already possessed themselves of the jewels when Miss Waters entered by a private door in the rear of the office. One of them immediately seized her. The other, he of the smiling countenance who when Leslie came unexpectedly upon the scene had seen fit to pass himself off as the captive broker, found it necessary at this juncture to return to the front office to silence Mr. Dearborn. That gentleman, it seems, had succeeded in partially removing the gag from his mouth and was making strenuous efforts to free himself from the cords which bound him. Meanwhile the remaining ruffian, who retained the bag of jewels in his hand, dragged Miss Waters into an adjoining washroom, designing to treat her in the same summary manner as they had treated Dearborn. But she had continued to put up a plucky fight, in the course of which the robber had dropped the bag of jewels and she had seized them, thrust them into her coat pocket and escaped by the back stairway to the alley below, with the robber in hot pursuit. There she had apparently been stunned by a blow from the robber, who before he could retrieve the jewels had been frightened off by those who had heard her screams.

Leslie's forthcoming novel is to bear the title, "The Pearl of Great Price." It is to be feared that it is rather sentimental in tone. However, the heroine thinks it is simply grand and that her author-husband is by far the cleverest man in the world.

Tracking a Thief

By LIEUTENANT JAMES O'NEIL

I WAS in the active employ of Pinkerton for many years, and took my full share of the risks incident to detective work. The very first case assigned me had more peril in it than any four others combined. I had done some "spotting" and "shadowing," and had helped on two or three cases, when I was sent to Milwaukee to look after an embezzler. The case was stated in a nutshell. A Mrs. Pierce, a widow of wealth, and a woman who trusted her servants altogether too much, received one day from the East by express a package of money amounting to $14,000. She had been in the habit of sending her butler to the bank to make deposits for her, and now and then to draw money on her written order. He had been with her for several years as a sort of man-of-all-work in the house, and she had found him strictly honest. She gave him the money to deposit without a fear of his being tempted. He was not seen after he left the house. He did not go to the bank, and for three or four days Mrs. Pierce and others labored under the belief that he had been robbed and perhaps murdered. The hunt for his body was going on when I reached Milwaukee.

The name of the butler was John Lane, and he was described to me as a sandy-haired, red-faced man, weighing 160 pounds, and wearing a sandy mustache. His habits were declared to be above reproach, and Mrs. Pierce indignantly resented my suggestion that he might have run away. So did the local detective who had the case in hand. I held from the first to the theory that he had run away. He had been told to hurry back. He could reach the bank in a walk of fifteen minutes, having only two or three turns to make. It was at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and he could be in no personal danger. No one could be found who had seen him between the house and the bank, although he was well known. But the best clue was found in Lane's room. There was a handful of sandy hair in a paper under the lavatory. There was another paper spotted with lather, in which were enough bristles to make a mustache. Behind an old trunk was a bottle which had contained hair-dye.

Mrs. Pierce received the money about ten o'clock in the forenoon, and she remarked to Lane that she would have him deposit it after dinner. He waited on the table at noon, and there was no change in his appearance, but between that time and two he shaved off his mustache, cut off a lot of his hair, applied the dye, and Mrs. Pierce remembered that he was muffled up as he went out, leaving by the side door.

Now came the hardest part of the work. When you know which way a criminal is heading it is quite easy to keep his trail, but when you can't say whether he is in New York or Omaha, or that he may not be hiding within two blocks of you, it is quite a different matter. From the servants in the house I learned that Lane had always declared he hated the cities and towns, and he had no care for fine clothes and society. He also had a great horror of the water. This seemed to argue that he would not head for Europe, as I at first feared. It was well known that he had a holy horror of the West, having read of bandits, prairie fires, grizzly bears, rattlesnakes, etc. That seemed to argue that he would not go West.

Would he go North or South? I was helped out of my dilemma in a curious way. I had been at every steamboat office and railroad depot, meeting with no success, and was standing in front of the Second National Bank, when a farmer-like man accosted me with:

"What do you say about this bill? I say it's good and the old woman says it's bad."

It was a five he had, and the "old woman" sat in a wagon on the opposite side of the street.

"Why does she suspect it to be bad?" I asked, as I surveyed the bill.

"Well, it was given to me four or five days ago by a guy who rode out home with us, had supper, and then cut across to the railroad station. I wouldn't have charged him over seventy-five cents at the most, and his liberality seems queer."

I was dead certain from his first words that I had got track of my man. We went into the bank to satisfy him that the bill was all right, and then crossed to the wagon. I want to tell you that country people are head and shoulders above the average city residents in the matter of observation and in remembering what they see.

"Well, one reason why I suspected this man," said the wife, "was because his hair was dreadfully haggled and then dyed. Such botch work you never saw. His hair was all in streaks of black and red, and he'd got the dye on his ears and neck."

The fellow had tried to play smart in leaving the city by one of the highways, but accident had revealed his trail to me. He had taken the train at a station about fifteen miles away, and he had four days the start of me. The first move was to run out to the country station at which he had taken the train. I there found that he had made many inquiries about the northern and western part of the State, and had finally purchased a ticket for Fond du Lac. The description of him was good, and I was about to buy a ticket for the same place and take a train due in half an hour, when in came a boy who had been there on the evening when Lane bought his ticket. He was a lad who helped around the station, and it was plain that he had a good deal of native wit.

"Yes, that chap bought a ticket for Fond du Lac, but I don't think he went there," replied the lad when I began to question him.

"What makes you think he did not?"

"Because," he answered, as he handed down a folder from the rack, "he was studying this route, which goes to Portage city. I think he meant to take this folder along, but dropped it. See how he has marked it with pencil."

So he had. He could run up to Watertown and go through by way of Beaver Dam. He had marked the time of arrival at the junction and of the arrival at Portage, and it could not be that he would take all that trouble to throw any one off his trail. There was no one after him, and he could not imagine that the boy would hold the marked folder against him. I therefore changed my route, and at the junction I got track of my man. He had no ticket, but had paid his fare in cash. It was night, and the state of his hair had not been noticed, but the conductor described Lane's general appearance, and said that he had changed a $20 bill for him. He might go no further than Beaver Dam, and I got off there and looked around for a few hours. No trace of him had been had, and I was at the depot to take the train, when a conversation between two young men aroused my interest.

"You ought to have told somebody," protested one.

"Yes, and been laughed at," replied the other.

"And he had ten thousand dollars?"

"Yes, double that, I imagine."

"And he was counting it on the bed in the hotel?"

"Yes. I saw him through the keyhole."

"I'll bet he was a robber."

"Maybe. He was off early in the morning. Well, so long, Tom, here's the train."

The one who had seen some one counting money was going west by my train, and I schemed to get a seat with him and draw him out. He was a porter at one of the hotels in Portage, and he had seen a guest answering Lane's description counting such a lot of money that it covered half the bed. The porter had made his observations through the keyhole of the door, and, being ashamed of himself, had hesitated to go to the landlord. The man had arrived without baggage, but had there purchased a valise, and his nervous manner and the sight of so much money in his possession had led the porter to finally conclude that there was a

mystery there somewhere, although he had not spoken of it to any one around the house.

The man had purchased a suit of coarse clothes, with hat and shoes to match, and in leaving had taken the highway leading toward Oshkosh. He had purchased another bottle of hair dye in Portage, but had apparently given his red hair up as a bad job. He not only left the bottle in his room, but by means of soap and water washed off some of the dye he had put on at Milwaukee.

Lane had given the landlord to understand that he was a hard-working young man who had started out to look for a job, but he had departed without fixing on anything definite. I did not believe he would go to Oshkosh. He was acting like a man who reasoned that if he could hide himself away in the country for a few weeks his crime and his identity would both be forgotten. To catch the embezzler without capturing his loot would have been no credit to me. He had several days the start of me, and had by this time got a job of some sort. I procured a rough suit of clothes, hired a horse, and set off on his trail. As he had gone on foot with a large valise in his hand it was easy to trace him along the road. He headed toward Oshkosh for five or six miles, and then turned directly north.

It was in the fall of the year, and the roads were in bad condition, but he made twenty-four miles that first day, not stopping at all for dinner. He went to the northeast for six miles, to the north for ten miles, and then he turned due west, almost on a line with La Crosse, and went eight miles before stopping at a hotel. I only made the same number of miles on horseback, but as he had to pause the next forenoon on account of the rain, I gained half a day on him. He proceeded toward La Crosse for ten miles more, and then went north two miles, and stayed overnight with a farmer, and talked about going to work in a saw-mill. Next day he headed due west, and reached the Wisconsin river at a hamlet called Little Bend. It was on the sixth day after he left Milwaukee that I located him, and he had then been at work in a saw-mill for a day and a half. I entered the hamlet on foot, as he had done, having a few extra clothes in a bundle, and it was soon known to the seventy-five or eighty population that I was in search of work. The owner of the only store in the place also kept a saloon and hotel, and under pretense of being footsore and used up, I remained idle for two or three days, although the mill owner was short of hands and desired me to go to work at once.

It may be thought strange that I did not at once arrest Lane and have done with it. Had I overhauled him en route that would have been the plan, for the money would have been in his valise. He had taken board at the hotel, and during my first half day there I had found his room open and his valise unlocked. There was nothing in it which any one would want to take away. He had, like a sharp man, taken his money out, and planted it. He could not justly suspect that I was after him, for after three or four days I went to work alongside of him and held him at a distance. He tried hard to get acquainted with me, but I was taciturn and unsocial. He gave me an opportunity to ask him questions, but I refused to profit by it. I admitted, for a purpose, that I left Milwaukee four or five days behind him, and after seeming to reflect for a while, he asked:

"Was there any special news when you left?"

"I don't remember."

"No murders or robberies?"

"There was a mystery of some sort, I believe. Somebody drew a lot of money out of the bank, fell into the hands of sharpers, and they were looking in the river and lake for his dead body."

"Hm!" he coughed and that ended our conversation, though I did not fail to notice the look of gratification which crept over his face. That he had hidden the treasure was certain. That he would visit it sooner or later was dead sure. I watched him closely during the day, and I saw that he was nervous and preoccupied. I expected he would go out to inspect his treasure at night, and I took my precautions that he should not escape me; but he made no move,

He went to work on Friday noon of one week, and I on Thursday of the next. When Sunday week came, it was a bright, warm day, and I made up my mind not to lose sight of him for an hour. There were several acres of logs in the yard, and after breakfast I went to the mill, climbed up in the attic, and had the yard and the hamlet under my eye. At about ten o'clock Lane came down into the yard, wandered about in an aimless sort of way, though all the time keeping his eyes open, and by and by I saw him inspecting a huge log lying near a thorn-apple tree, which was the only tree or bush in the yard.

I had been hauling logs with the cattle to the bank and dumping them off for the elevator or car to carry them up the incline into the mill, and had noticed the big log. It had been there for years, and was worthless. Now that I saw Lane in the vicinity, I made up my mind that he had hidden his money close by, and I slipped out and went for a ramble in the woods.

That night at midnight, without anything having happened to create suspicion on Lane's part, I dressed myself and crept out of the tavern to make a hunt for the money. On my way out I paused at his door, and he was breathing like a man fast asleep. I had my revolver and a pair of handcuffs ready to take with me, but missed them after I got outside. Everything about was so quiet that I set off, thinking to be back with the money in a few minutes. The big log lay within twenty feet of the bank. There was a hollow in one end, but no money. The other end was solid. I climbed over it and passed around it, and had just discovered a hollow which had been the base of a big limb, when I got a blow on the neck which rolled me over and over for ten feet.

Before I could get up Lane was upon me. He was a good deal the larger and stouter man, but he could not hold me still. I could roll under him, and, while his object seemed to be to clutch my throat, I gave him two good blows in the face and got to my feet. Not a word was spoken by either of us. We stood for a moment gasping for breath, and then he rushed at me like an enraged bull, and we both clinched. He handled me almost as if I had been a boy, and it wasn't over a minute before we were on the bank above water twelve feet deep. There was a thin skim of ice over it.

In a boxing match I could have got the better of Lane. In such a clinch his brute strength was a terrible advantage. His object was, of course, to pitch me into the river, but I hung to him so well that he was baffled. We were still struggling on the brink when a great slice of the bank gave way and we went into the ice-cold water, both having a firm hold, but I was on top of Lane.

Lane must have had his mouth open, for he began to strangle at once, and if I ever worked hard for three minutes it was to save him. He was unconscious when I got him to the bank and pulled him up, while I was as good as frozen. By a liberal use of my voice I aroused three or four men, and we got Lane to the hotel, and worked over him for half an hour before he opened his eyes. Then I tucked him up, gave him a big drink of hot whisky and went out and got the money. He had spent about $40 of it. Not a word did he reply as I told him who I was, who he was, and showed him the money. Not a word did he utter all the way back to Milwaukee, and it was only after Mrs. Pierce had refused to prosecute him and he was turned loose that he sullenly muttered:

"I was just fool enough to argue that no detective living could overhaul me."

The Menace of Forgery

By CARL H. GETZ

CARL H. GETZ, the author, has just completed a tour of the American continent after making a two years' exhaustive study of the crime of forgery. Everywhere he went he has had entree to banks, offices of agencies protecting banks, the police departments and surety companies. Mr. Getz writes with the authoriy of a disinterested student of one of the most serious of all crimes against property.—EDITOR.

The willingness of bankers and business men to drop prosecution of forgers, if they are able to recover their losses, is doing more than any other one thing to encourage that crime, one of the most serious crimes against property.

No man can travel from coast to coast, from Canada to Mexico, and interview bankers, business men, bank detectives, police officers and representatives of the various surety companies without being profoundly impressed that there is serious need of an educational endeavor to teach that forgery is a crime and must be treated as a crime. The present tendency to drop prosecution if losses can be recovered is not only fundamentally wrong socially, but it is resulting in the increase of a crime which is already costing American business $125,000,000 a year.

To get some appreciation of the scope of forgery it is necessary to get some understanding of the extent to which checks are used in this country. Last year the depositors of America wrote 6,000,000,000—billion, not million—checks. Now it is easy to write a figure like that, but it is practically impossible to give any one an idea of just what that means.

Those 6,000,000,000 checks were written for a total of $400,000,000,000. That is fifty times more money than there is in circulation. Translated, that means that in 1892 every bank depositor wrote an average of 6 checks for $4,000. Contrast that with the fact that during the same year the average amount of money in circulation per capita was but $39.87.

That will give some idea of the field in which the American check crooks operate. In Canada, where checks are used almost as much as they are in this country, the commonest type of forgery is that of forged certifications. In England, where banking rules differ from ours, there is not nearly as much forgery. One cannot cash a check written on one bank at another bank in Great Britain. Then, too, when a person opens a bank account in England it is necessary not only to provide positive means of identification, but a person must come personally sponsored. No man can walk into a bank and open an account without personal references, as it is done in this country.

On the continent, where most business is transacted with cash, there is comparatively little forgery.

Now to give some idea of the extent of this crime in all its ramifications, forged signatures, forged endorsements, forged certifications, counterfeit checks—that is, where the entire check has been counterfeited even to the extent of the kind of paper used, the type style, the coloring, the numbering and even the same kind of check-protecting devices—bogus checks—checks written on banks where the writer has no funds.

Chairman William B. Joyce of the National Surety Company, which has a material interest in the crime of forgery, recently enlisted the cooperation of thirty

different surety companies to learn exactly just how serious forgery is. That survey revealed that in 1922 the losses were approximately $350,000 a day. That means an annual loss of $125,000,000. It also means that in three years the check crooks of the country steal enough to build another Panama Canal, which is just about the costliest structure we have in this country. In other words, $1 out of every $3,000 that goes through the clearing houses of the United States is stolen.

The natural question that might be asked right here is just why so little is done about this. The first answer is because the public knows so little about it. Then, one might ask, why isn't the public acquainted with the facts? And the answer to that is that there are various reasons why the public is kept in the dark. Here they are:

The first reason is that the banks, which suffer most of the losses, for obvious reasons dislike to have any publicity given to the fact that there may be something hazardous about one's relations with that bank. Business men will not admit that any one can tamper with their bank accounts.

Banks are protected by private detective agencies. Forgery cases are assigned to them, not to the city police. These detectives are instructed to avoid publicity. Thousands of cases of forgery, and by forgery is meant any of its ramifications, never reach the ears and eyes of the public for this reason.

In our large cities, where forgery is most serious, there is a terrific pressure of news. There is little of public interest in the average small forgery case. That is the reason why so many cases are never made public.

Crooks like to operate around the early part of the month, so that bank depositors will not learn of their losses until weeks later, when cancelled vouchers are returned by the bank.

But the most important reason why the public knows so little about this crime is that bankers and business men everywhere are invariably willing to hush up forgery cases, provided they can cover their losses. It is their money they want back. They have no interest whatever in prosecuting some forger.

I was in the office of the captain of detectives of the city of Tacoma in the State of Washington when a man rushed in all out of breath with the news that he had just cashed a bogus check for $300. He knew who did it and he wanted a detective. He was asked whether he had a warrant.

"Oh, I don't want to arrest him," said the man. "I only want to scare him and get back what I can."

When the police showed no interest in his troubles the man said he guessed he would get a warrant.

"I've gotten $20 out of him," he said, "and I want to see how much more I can recover."

"You have gotten $20 out of him?" repeated the captain of detectives.

"Yes," said the man.

"Then," said the captain of detectives, "we can do nothing for you. What was originally a criminal case is now a civil case. All you can do is to retain a lawyer, sue to collect $280, get judgment, and attach anything attachable."

"But this man has nothing which can be attached." said the man.

"Then you are out $280," said the captain. "The moment you accepted one penny on account that bogus check became a promissory note."

Now this is something that most business men do not know, and it is something most crooks do know.

In a certain office on the Pacific Coast, the office of the captain of detectives, I saw this sign:

"We charge ten per cent. on all collections."

"I am getting tired of running a collection agency," this detective said. "The bankers and business men of this city seem to think that all I have to do is to collect money for them. When I make conscientious effort to keep this city clean and try to prosecute forgers, I don't get any cooperation."

There is a case in another coast city that is attracting considerable attention. A young man of good family forged checks

to the extent of $398. He escaped to California and was returned to the State of Washington at an expense of $209 to the State. Friends of this young man succeeded in getting him released on bail; they visited all those who suffered losses and got them to agree not to appear as witnesses provided their losses were recovered. In addition these friends have offered to compensate the State for the money it spent in returning the forger to the State. Efforts are being made to have the young man paroled, and it looks very much as if their efforts would succeed.

Now there is probably no reason why this particular man should be made an example and should be prosecuted, but this willingness to look upon forgery as a bit of wild oats is all wrong, and one of these days the police of the country are going to protest so vigorously that the whole situation will be brought forcibly to the public's attention.

I know of a city of 350,000 where there is but one bank which is willing to prosecute cases of forgery. All of the other banks in the city will drop the charge if they can recover their money.

There is also this element to contend with: Most banks and important businesses are covered with forgery bonds. The bonds give them absolute protection, provided they are not guilty of negligence. They usually are not. They can't lose. So the result is that the bank leaves the prosecution of forgers to the surety companies. Now prosecuting forgers is not a profitable business. The surety companies have done an amazingly fine piece of work in cutting into forgery losses, but in a country the size of the United States, where there is no registration of criminals such as is common abroad, the problems of a secret service branch of a surety company are almost insurmountable.

Then there is still another element. The member banks of the American Bankers Association, 24,000 in all, are protected by the operatives of the William J. Burns International Detective Agency, Inc., which has some forty offices in the United States and Canada, as well as agencies abroad. The Burns people are compensated on a per diem basis. The result is that it is common for banks to decline to refer cases to the Burns operatives because of the expense of investigation. If the banks can get their money there is an inclination to stop right there.

All this should be of the greatest concern to the American business man, because forgery strikes at the very heart of our American business, credit. That which strikes at credit, at our institution of banking, strikes hardest. The elimination of forgery will result in increased public confidence in banks and banking, and such increased confidence is surely to be desired.

Probably the most amazing fact about forgery is that the exercise of just ordinary precaution would eliminate a great part of forgery losses of this country. The first and most important rule that should be observed is one that has been sung from the housetops since the first bank check was written many years ago. That rule is:

Never cash a check for a stranger.

By a stranger is meant a man or a woman who is not known personally by the person who is asked to cash a check. A stranger remains a stranger, even though he may reveal a hundred different things which tend to identify him. When a crook starts out to cash worthless checks he goes prepared.

A crook walked into a hotel in Minneapolis, ran up a bill for $42 and offered a check for $300 in payment. The cashier asked for proof of identification. The man displayed the usual letters, a club card, personal cards and so on, and then, as if to clinch the argument, he took off his coat, rolled up his sleeve, and there on his arm was tattooed his name. The check was cashed, and a few days later it came back marked "no funds." A few days later the same man tried this same game in another hotel in another city, but was caught. On his arm there was another name tattooed. His tattooing was faked, and that was his means of throwing his victim off his guard.

Not long ago, on a Saturday afternoon and night, in a certain Virginia town, a man dressed as laborer went into forty-three stores, made small purchases, and offered

what appeared to be a salary check. The check was printed on safety paper, it was properly numbered, there were two signatures, and it was written on a check protector. On the corner of the check was printed, "Salary check, Employee No. 38." As the man handed out the check he displayed a brass check on which was stamped, "Acme Machine Shops, 65 West street, Employee No. 38."

Forty-three of these checks were cashed. All of them came back marked "no account." When the merchants looked into the phone book to advise the Acme Machine Shops that some of their checks had been forged, it was learned that there was no such company. Sixty-five West street turned out to be a vacant lot.

Recently there was a gang of five Austrian forgers operating on the Pacific Coast. Their plan was to go to cities where there was considerable construction. Then two of the men would get jobs as helpers and each week would receive salary checks. These were duplicated, and on a Saturday afternoon from $4,000 to $5,000 worth of checks were unloaded. Merchants accepted these checks right and left. All of them were forgeries. If the merchants had exercised caution and refused to cash these checks for strangers they would have saved themselves considerable money.

It is a curious fact that business men ordinarily cautious will accept checks which seem to have been certified. Most certification and acceptance stamps are just ordinary rubber stamps, and can be duplicated in any rubber stamp store. Certified checks should be subjected to the same scrutiny as any other kind of a check. It is possible for a crook to steal a check and then take it to a bank to have it certified.

Another type of check which is commonly and easily cashed is the check which seems to have an O. K. endorsement.

A crook steals a check, endorses it, and then tries to cash it. The teller refuses to cash the check, explaining that he does not know the man.

"I told Mr. So-and-So he would have to come here and identify me, but he said you people would recognize the signature and that I would have no difficulty. I wonder what I can do? Guess I will go back and see if he can't come here. By the way, if he can't come, can I get him to O. K. my signature?"

And 99 out of 100 tellers will reply in the affirmative.

The crook steps into a cigar store, forges the endorsement again and then adds, "Signature O. K." In presenting his check the second time he is asked to sign his name again, and of course that's easy. Here again if the bank had refused to cash a check for a stranger money would have been saved.

Merchants should likewise refuse to deliver merchandise which has been paid by check from an unknown customer.

The second rule which should be observed is one that applies to banks, and that is, that under no circumstances should the withdrawal of funds be permitted against uncollected items. A few years ago this type of crime became so common that the Burns operatives ruled that to permit the withdrawal of funds against uncollected items was bad banking practice, and that no investigation would be made of such a crime.

It is common for crooks to open bank accounts, keep the account active for a period of weeks, and then deposit a large check on some bank in a distant city. Possibly the next day, before an opportunity has been had to have the check cleared, an effort is made to cash a larger check. And the surprising fact is that crooks have found this a profitable plan.

The business man must be made to realize that there is very little difference between a check and currency. It must be remembered always that a crook has to have a check to operate. Because of this fact it is getting increasingly common for banks to require depositors to go to one of the teller's cages to get blank checks, and then such checks are delivered only when identity is established.

Checks, checkbook and bankbook should be kept under lock and key constantly. Blank checks should never be given to strangers. Merchants should never sell

checks. It is quite common in some sections of the country for people to get personal checks so that they may send them through the mail instead of currency. Such checks may fall into crooked hands, and if so loss will result.

The practice of department stores in notifying their customers that they have blank checks on hand for the convenience of their depositors is another practice that is being discouraged by the police.

In the larger cities where apartment houses are common and where it is usual to use mail boxes which leave the letters exposed, the police are asking that boxes be substituted which will keep the letters out of sight. The practice of apartment houses in leaving letters exposed on a table in the hall where the tenants can pick them up at their convenience is another practice that is being discouraged.

A hotel keeper in Missouri experienced a series of small losses. He bought some safety paper, a check protector and safety ink. Then, he said to himself, he was protected. But Saturday of that same week one of his employees tore out one of his checks from his check book, inserted it into the check writer, wrote out a check for $500, and then proceeded to forge the remainder of the check with safety ink. The check was cashed, and the man found that his protection didn't protect him very much.

Recently a man walked into a bank in Boston and asked for the bankbook of Mr. So-and-So. The book was handed to him, and an examination of it revealed the fact that the man had $2,700 on deposit. The man picked up a counter check, and with the aid of one of the cancelled checks forged a check for $2,500. This man's method was to place a cancelled check over a blank check and to trace over the original check with a heavy pencil. This would leave a crease on the blank check which was later filled in with ink. When this man took his check to the window the teller said he didn't remember him. Whereupon the man tossed in his bankbook and a few cancelled checks to identify himself. The check was cashed.

An analysis of that crime will reveal two instances of negligence. First of all, counter checks should not be left where they can be picked up by any one. Secondly, bankbooks should not be given to strangers.

On my trip recently I was in a bank which had the word "Counter" printed horizontally at the end of the check. A crook could have gone into that bank, picked up a supply of checks and with the aid of a knife or shears could have cut off the end of the check and then would have had something with which to operate. The word "counter" should be printed in large outline type on the face of the check.

There is a bank in Washington which has a very beautiful check, but which is absolutely impervious to acids or alkalies. I saw the writing from a check completely removed, and after it had dried and two other checks were handed to me I couldn't tell which check had been tampered with. Sensitive checks should be used.

I don't want any one to get the impression that I wish to discourage the use of check protectors. On the contrary, the use of safety paper and check protectors has just about eliminated the crime of check-raising and alteration. But all the safety paper and check protectors in the world will not protect against forged endorsements. The manufacturer may insist the bank is responsible for forged endorsements. But suppose the bank says that an endorsement is genuine and the depositor says it is forgery. Then what? Unless the depositor is covered with a forgery bond he usually is compelled to resort to litigation. And who wants to get into a legal fight with his bank?

Forgery is a most serious crime. Education of the public, and that alone, will break it down. At the present time the feeling of business men that the police are mere collection agencies is doing more than anything to increase the losses. One of these days when the public is thoroughly informed about the extent of the losses from forgery something will be done to convince banks and business men that they themselves are guilty of negligence when they permit forgers to continue unmolested. The forger is a criminal, and he must be treated as such. That's the lesson the banker and business man must learn.

Suspicious Looking People

THERE is a big interrogation-point in a great many people's minds regarding the way some young men earning anywhere from $10 to $18 a week can dress as well as men earning five or six times as much.

The early elevated trains and subways are crowded with well-dressed young men. They are dressed well, and their clothing, from the form fitting coat to the light cloth gaiters over their shoes, would compare favorably with the latest fashion plate. Yet if you follow them you will be pretty sure to learn that they are simply clerks on small salaries.

They do not "borrow," and as for speculating, they do that sometimes in a small way. Their clothes are bought honestly enough with the money they earn every week, and the way they do it is very easy.

Most New Yorkers have heard of that class of people known as "fences," whose business is to buy stolen goods from thieves at a ridiculously low price and sell the stuff to small dealers at a small profit.

A "fence" will buy anything that is stolen, from a silver spoon to a suit of clothes, and thereby hangs part of the tale.

Every time there is a big clothing robbery the stuff is fenced and immediately passed to the sacred precincts of the East Side. Sometimes a portion of the thieves' loot finds its way into clothing stores in better neighborhoods, and because of the extremely reasonable price at which it is bought the suits are sold very cheap.

Now, you would not suppose a broker's clerk would go to Hester street for clothes.

Neither does he.

He sends the clothing man's agent for what he wants. This agent calls on the clerk and is told what style of clothing is wanted. Then the young man is measured, and when the clothes come home they need very little altering. The cost is comparatively nothing. A good coat and vest can be bought for from $8 to $20, while cutaways and sack suits are to be had for prices ranging from $5 to $15.

Of course a great deal of the stuff is second hand, and a great deal is stolen. The second-hand clothes are easily "fixed up," and the merchants of the slums have so delicate a faculty for this "fixing-up" process that they can easily change the whole complexion of a suit.

The stolen goods are sold just as they are bought with the exception of a slight change in the maker's tag on the inside of the collar.

Still there is another, more legitimate, way of obtaining clothing that is fashionable, new and costly. There are a great many young men, rich and fashionable, in New York, who spend most of their time buying and giving clothes away after wearing them once or twice.

This may seem strange to men who have but two suits and wear them until they are absolutely too threadbare to wear any longer, yet, nevertheless, it is the case. Suits of clothes costing all the way from $50 to $100 each are made for these wealthy young men, and are worn probably three or four times and then given to valets.

To follow the course of the clothes from this point would be a pretty heavy under-

Sometimes they are sold to second-hand dealers on Sixth, Fourth and Third avenues, who make a handsome profit on every suit bought and sold.

Out of the clothes given to him the valet keeps the best for himself, of course, and manages to make considerable money out of what he sells. Thus it is that so many young men earning small salaries can dress so fashionably and live honestly.

The Square Deceivers

By CARL GARETT HODGES

"GETTING away with a crime really is a science. The game develops many little intricacies that only the immediate moment can solve. As a rule, one can, if educated in the principles of the science, plan a program which will take into consideration any emergency that might arise."

"That may be true, D'Arcy, but suppose that the enemy applies the same principles you do. The game then becomes mighty interesting, to say the least, and the prize goes to the shrewdest man. Plans are good because they guide your work along more smoothly, but when you say that plans can be laid which are invulnerable you go too far."

D'Arcy snuggled into his steamer chair and bundled his rugs closer about him, for the salt air of the sea was crisp and bracing.

"You're prejudiced, Warren. Just because you lost the Juggernaut diamond you believe that all plans have a weak link somewhere waiting to be tested."

Warren laughed in answer as he reached into his coat pocket. D'Arcy's eyes, which had followed the hand, bulged in surprise as the hand brought forth a string of shining milky-white pearls. Warren caught a covetous glance in D'Arcy's eyes, and said:

"You worship jewels, I do believe!"

D'Arcy's eyes wavered. He shrugged his shoulders.

"I think I do in a way. I want every one that I see. But after I get it I lose all interest in it. That isn't all, though. My name is so well known in U. S. customs circles that I crave jewels simply for the opportunity to smuggle them over."

The glint did not leave D'Arcy's eyes when Warren returned the necklace to the pocket. He evidently wished to learn more about that string of pearls.

"Where did you get that?" He nodded towards the pocket which held the jewels.

"In Vienna. It's a nice little story in itself. And it shows, too, how much plans can amount to in an emergency. I got them at a nice little ball in honor of some duchess, but before I got away clean a couple of detectives that were hired by the hostess camped on my trail and ran me down. Of course, they had no evidence to prove that I had taken the necklace, but if they found it on me I was done for. I had no friends in the city. I trusted no one, and I was afraid to hide it. But I thought of a good hiding-place, acted on it, and when the detectives caught me I had nothing incriminating on me."

D'Arcy grinned understandingly.

"Where did you hide it?" he asked. "Did you swallow it?"

"I had one of these old-fashioned fill-'em-yourself fountain pens," Warren explained, "that I had used for a year after I punched a hole in the rubber that held the ink. I ripped the rubber out, unstrung the pearls, put 'em in the penholder, and screwed the point on. It made the niftiest hiding-place I ever saw."

"Yes, I should think so," D'Arcy agreed. "But I still stand back of my argument and intend to prove that I am right."

D'Arcy ceased speaking as a scream sounded from near the rail in front of them, and Warren sprang up.

"What is it?" he asked. "Man overboard?"

D'Arcy did not answer, but strode over to the steamer rail, followed by Jack Warren..

A lady near the rail was pale from terror, and the big fat man by her side, evidently her husband, was trying to calm her, but he went at it in the wrong way.

"What did I tell you? But you would have it. A twenty-thousand-dollar necklace—gone! God knows where."

The fat man's face grew purple with rage as a crowd began to gather.

"What's the trouble here?" D'Arcy interrupted. "Something happen to the lady?"

"Ah, no, nothing at all. Just a twenty-thousand-dollar necklace—lost or stolen."

"What kind of a necklace was it?" D'Arcy asked. "When do you last remember having it? Has any one acted suspiciously?"

Color began to return to the lady's pale face as she answered his questions.

"It was a seventeen-stone graduated pearl necklace with a platinum clasp. No one has been following me or been near my stateroom. It is a complete shock to me." And her dainty hand returned to her forehead.

D'Arcy lapsed for a second in thought till Warren addressed the lady.

"Your pardon, madam, but when did you first miss the necklace?" he asked politely.

"Just now, standing at the rail, but I had it, I know, when we rounded the deck."

Warren nodded in sympathy.

"Davy Jones is wearing it now, I guess. You probably lost it over the rail," he said.

The crowd, which had expected a sensation, laughed heartlessly and dispersed. The unfortunate lady was helped to her stateroom by her husband, and the polite D'Arcy, who, after his duty was done, went straight to his stateroom. Warren resumed his steamer chair in nonchalant ease.

D'Arcy sat smoking in his stateroom, which was fairly comfortable at that time of the year without artificial heat. He was in a highly satisfactory mood and greatly pleased with himself. He had ample reason, for he had undoubtedly classified Jack Warren. Jack must have been clever, for when he deceived Rene D'Arcy he was a good one. D'Arcy chuckled in remembrance.

"And to think I suspected him of being a revenue agent. It's one on me, as the Yankees used to say in the Argonne. I believe Warren wishes he hadn't shown that necklace to me. It's that woman's necklace, all right. He was clever, though, in making her believe she lost it over the rail. I'll have to watch myself or he'll get the Juggernaut from me."

"Get what?" A cheery voice sounded from the doorway, in which a slender, beautiful girl stood framed. D'Arcy looked up at her.

"Hello, Connie, how's your headache? Any better?"

"Some," she said. "But go on where you stopped. Tell me all about the Juggernaut. You know you've promised to."

"How do I know you're square? I've known you only three days, since we boarded this boat in Liverpool. You say you were after the Juggernaut, too, but how do I know?"

"How suspicious you are," Connie pouted, and it had the desired effect on D'Arcy.

"But you ought to have some proof. Have you?"

Connie smiled as she took a rich and ornately carved box from a pocket in her skirt.

"Is that enough?" and she held the box up for him to see.

A rap sounded on the door and it opened to admit Jack Warren. His eyes calmly scanned the room, but widened as they settled on the box which Connie held.

D'Arcy noticed his surprise.

"You act as if you might have seen that box before. Where?"

"At the Armitage home in Paris."

Connie laughed in triumph and turned to D'Arcy with her nose tilted up in playful scorn.

"Will you believe me now?" she asked.

"Surely," he said, "and, by the way, since you two seem to be tangled in the same web, it would be best to know each other's names. Miss Constance Wells—Mr. Jack Warren."

Jack smiled as he nodded to her.

"Would it be asking too much if I inquired where you got the box and how?"

"It's this way: I got an invitation which gave me an opportunity to stay with the Armitages for a few days before the ball. While there I found the secret place where the Juggernaut diamond was kept. It was concealed in this box and placed inside the newel post of the stairway——"

"In the east wing of the house," Jack finished for her.

"The night of the ball I waited until the house was quiet and then slipped downstairs and opened the small spring door in the newel post. I heard a voice in the next room, and I took the box, closed the door, and went upstairs. I opened this little box, and it was—empty. Some one had beaten me to it."

D'Arcy laughed.

"That some one was me, as you probably know. I saw no need of taking the box and thought that perhaps it would delay the discovery of the loss."

Jack grinned sheepishly.

"You both got something, while I've nothing to show for my pains. I arrived too late on the scene. Miss Wells here had just taken the box, and all I found was a hole in the newel post."

D'Arcy spoke slowly.

"After I finish this deal I think we three could organize a good, strong triumvirate in the smuggling game. Think it over."

Jack Warren sat musing in his old steamer chair on deck, bundled up with rugs, for it was rather chilly, and, besides, a good stiff breeze was blowing—so stiff, in fact, that a young lady who rounded the end of the deck at that instant was almost blown over. She stumbled to the chair next to Warren, and, to give away a secret, as she had been the subject of Warren's musing, he seemed glad of it. She sank into its cozy warmth with a happy sigh. Jack jumped up and arranged the rugs about her. He tried to start a conversation.

"Rather chilly, isn't it?"

"It's never exactly pleasant at this time of the year," replied Connie.

"Oh, then you've made the trans-Atlantic trip before?"

"Yes, you see, my husband demands it."

"And what is your business, may I ask?"

"You may ask, but that doesn't mean that you are going to find out. You ought to know without my telling, though. Birds of a feather flock together."

"Connie, you know the game we're playing doesn't get a woman anywhere. You eventually get wealth and notoriety, but socially you are a sort of outcast. Suppose you chuck it and go straight."

"Why don't you chuck it? Why doesn't D'Arcy chuck it? Simply because of his desire to some day outwit Jack Hastings. Neither has seen the other, but both have sworn that they will capture or outwit the other. Hastings is a revenue agent who used to be a gentleman burglar, but is now famous because of his ability to apply his talents on the side of the law. I'm in the game for the same reason that all of us are —for the excitement."

Warren risked a rebuke for his boldness.

"Let's pair up on the right side of the law then. It will be just as exciting, and we can't be arrested if we don't work too zealously."

Connie only dimpled more.

"I'll let you know when we dock in New York. You see, I couldn't leave D'Arcy till we finish the job we are on."

The remainder of the afternoon was spent in those two steamer chairs, which were very, very close together. But under such circumstances joy is paramount, at least in this case. Confidences were shyly exchanged relative to the age-old riddle. In fact, when Jack and Connie separated they felt that they knew each other very well and were quite happy in the knowledge, so happy in fact that nothing else mattered.

Four persons were grouped about a single, already opened trunk. One was Mr. Cameron, who had grown old in the customs service and who was sincerely disliked by all smugglers as one of the cleverest officers in the States. The others were Connie, Warren and D'Arcy.

Cameron was calmly but carefully going through D'Arcy's trunk, piling his effects neatly as he took them out. A confident grin half-masked D'Arcy's nervousness.

Connie and Jack showed little interest in the proceedings.

Finally the trunk stood empty, with nothing contraband found. Cameron lifted one end of the trunk suddenly, listening carefully for any rattle which would indicate something hidden in a false bottom. No rattle came.

D'Arcy laughed mockingly at his failure.

"If I had the Juggernaut diamond, you don't suppose I'd hide it there, do you?" he asked.

Cameron did not answer. Connie threw a bomb into their midst.

"The Juggernaut is there!"

As Cameron looked his surprise Connie knelt by the side of the trunk, every move followed by three pairs of eyes. She worked swiftly. With a small penknife she pried off a small button which held one of the straps to the side of the trunk. It was covered with a bluish-colored cloth, but this she picked off in a few seconds, to disclose —the Juggernaut!

Cameron took it from her and passed it to Warren at his request. Connie's happiness was short-lived. Warren spoke calmly but briefly:

"This thing isn't the Juggernaut. It's an imitation—worthless. And besides, it's white, while the Juggernaut is a blue-white, the chief reason for its value."

Connie came close to crying with disappointment. She turned to Warren. He patted her shoulder to comfort her. Then he stepped over to D'Arcy, and with a lightning-quick movement took a fountain pen from D'Arcy's pocket. D'Arcy screamed in rage as he realized what Warren had done.

Cameron watched D'Arcy as Warren unscrewed the cap from the pen and then removed the point. He inverted the barrel and out rolled a small but wonderful blue-white diamond, which undoubtedly was the Juggernaut.

Connie's eyes regained their lustre, and she seemed very happy. Cameron had taken the jewel from Warren's fingers. He turned to Connie.

"I will have to keep this for a while to use in certain proceedings, but I'll return it to your mother, Mrs. Armitage, as soon as possible."

Warren's eyes widened as he gazed at Connie.

"You are Constance Wells——"

"——Armitage," she finished for him.

Warren grew bold.

"You see, it doesn't make much difference. I'm going to ask you to change it."

Cameron smiled at them.

"I believe he has a surprise for you, though, too. His name is Hastings, premier revenue agent, Mr. Jack Warren Hastings."

Connie dimpled again.

"Why did you deceive me?"

Jack laughed whole-heartedly.

"What else could I do when you deceived me? I had to reciprocate."

Cameron broke in.

"How did you know the jewel's hiding-place? Were you in on it with him?"

"No, I told him a little story about a fellow in Vienna who hid some pearls in a fountain pen. It evidently sounded good to him, and he tried it, to his sorrow. D'Arcy would be a good man on the right side."

Connie smiled as Jack came to her. He spoke eagerly. "Now that I know you're not a crook and you know I'm not a crook——"

Connie smiled mockingly.

"D'Arcy claimed that you were. He said you stole a necklace on board the liner and that you were clever enough to suggest that the lady had lost it while leaning over the rail. And I wondered myself how you found out about where the Juggernaut was kept?"

"I got that information from the newspapers," Jack retorted. "And as to D'Arcy's claim, I wanted him to believe me a crook, for he wouldn't accept me at my own rating. When the necklace was lost, and I suggested that it was lost overboard, he thought it was a trick to halt any possible investigations. And it does sound plausible. But let me finish my question: Don't you think you could learn to like me just a little bit?"

Connie blushed at his fond embrace. "Oh, I suppose I could. It wouldn't be hard with a good teacher, would it?"

At Gert's Suggestion

By GILBERT HAMMOND

CHAPTER ONE

IMPATIENTLY the girl paced the cheap furnished room, occasionally running her hand feverishly through the shining black strands of her bobbed hair. She glanced at the alarm clock on the bureau. It registered four o'clock. Outside she could hear the heavy, leisured footsteps of the policeman reverberate through the dark, deserted street.

"Oh, won't he ever come? Won't he ever come?" she whispered to herself distractedly. "He should have been here long ago. He's been caught. I told him not to try to do that job single-handed."

The patrolman's footsteps died away, and except for the rumbling of a distant elevated train the streets were silent. The clock continued unsympathetically to tick off the progress of time; the girl was becoming frantic with anxiety. Presently she heard the creaking of carpeted stairs and a footstep outside the door. She flew to open it. In another moment a man, white of face and panting from some recent exertion, had stepped in.

"Nat!" the girl exclaimed, her arms about his neck, "you're safe. There's nobody trailing you, is there?"

"There was," Nat informed her, his manner still disturbed from the effects of his late alarm, "but I managed to shake them off."

The girl released him in dismay and bit her lower lip tragically.

"Didn't it—go through right?" she asked. "Didn't you—didn't you get it?"

He met this question by pulling several packages of bills from his pockets.

"There it is," he said. "About ten thousand dollars."

"Ten thousand!" she gasped, clutching with avid hands the precious package of yellow and green engraved paper. "Why, honey, we can shake this burg for good now."

She was almost hysterically happy, dabbing her eyes with a handkerchief as she continued:

"Think of it! This money's enough to put us in a position where we won't ever have to pull any crooked work again and can live in peace without always expecting the knock of some leather-headed bull on the door and—but what's the matter, dear? Did anything go wrong that's going to mean trouble?"

"Something did go wrong, Gert," he told her; "something that's going to mean trouble and nothing else but. I got into the office where the safe was kept O. K. I unpacked my tools, put on the gloves and set to work. There wasn't no trouble getting into the safe, but, dammit, I must have set off an alarm somewhere. Just as I'd laid my hands on the money I heard a noise just outside the door. There was just one thing to do—make a break for it. I grabbed the money and shoved it into my pockets, and then, all of a sudden, the light was switched on. It didn't take but half a look to see that somebody was in the office with me and just my cursed luck that it should happen to be Joe Murphy, the only bull in New York that knows me."

"The one that nabbed you at the Zoo for lifting leathers?"

"The same bird, but I got away from him that time and did it again to-night. He got just a flash of my face before I threw a jimmy at him. It hit him square on the side of the jaw and laid him out on the floor. I ran over him, got through the door

in a jiffy and almost fell down three flights of back stairs before I got out of the building in spite of its being full of cops by that time. With about sixty seconds start on the cops I nailed a taxi, slipped out after three blocks and hit the subway. After that all I had to do was to come straight to the room here.

"Thank God, you'll never have to take such risks again," Gert breathed fervently. "But what is it that still worries you? They can't convict you just because one bull thought he recognized you."

"No," Nat responded gloomily, "but in getting away I had to leave my tools behind me, and—don't you see—my fingerprints are on every one of them."

"But they haven't got your fingerprints at headquarters, have they?" Gert asked anxiously.

"No, but they'll be searching for me. And when they find me all they need to do is to compare prints, then I go up the river for a long stretch. I'm pretty sure Murphy got the name I'm known by from some stool-pigeon. The bulls are going to be after me hot and heavy."

The girl's pale, pretty face was thoughtful for a while. Then she said:

"Nat, you mean it, don't you? That you want to cut this crooked business and go in for something safer?"

"Sure I do, sweetheart. That is, if the bulls will leave me alone and let me go honest."

"Then you must get a job here in New York right away."

Nat was surprised.

"Huh!" he exclaimed. "I want to get out of town as quick as I can. What's the idea of being in such a sweat about me going to work so soon? We've got ten thousand dollars, haven't we?"

"Nat," said the girl firmly, "it'll be too risky trying to get out of New York. All they have to do is to arrest you as a suspect and that's your finish. If Murphy has ever noticed that little scar on the side of your face they wouldn't have any trouble picking you up at railroad stations. Nat, you know I used to be a waitress. Did you ever work in a restaurant?"

"No, never."

"Well, you must pretend that you have. I'll tell you what kind of job to ask for and what to say to the proprietor when he asks you if you've had any experience. Now, listen."

CHAPTER TWO

AT headquarters later in the morning Detective Joseph Murphy, with a patched-up jaw, was giving the captain a description of Nat Trimble, which was to be broadcasted to police departments all over the city.

"Don't forget that he's got a little scar low down on his left jaw," added Murphy in summing up. "It's easy enough to see if you look close enough. We ought to have that weasel in a few days, and with the fingerprints we've got on those tools we ought to beat all Jersey records in sending him up."

"Looks like you're going to have a nice little scar down your own jaw when the doctor takes that patch off," commented the captain.

"That's nothing to the kind of jaw he's going to have after I get hold of him," gritted Murphy to himself.

Murphy went home in a bad temper and slept until evening. Then he started forth on his search for Nat Trimble. He knew nothing whatever about the habits and haunts of the crook except the slight information he had obtained from a stool-pigeon who had told him that Nat was a pickpocket operating chiefly in the midnight after-the-atre rush in the Times Square station of the subway. But beyond that very little was known. He was an out-of-town thief and had connected himself with none of the local crook's fraternities. To be sure, he had found it necessary to establish relations of a sort with the underworld, but he was not generally known to the frequenters of these nether regions. Still, Murphy figured, there were undoubtedly a few individuals who could enlighten him as to the safe-cracking pickpocket's whereabouts. Trim-

ble's last haul of ten thousand dollars had been sufficiently large to merit a strenuous effort on the part of Murphy to capture the crook. And there was that personal indignity to which Murphy had been subjected—the incident in which he had blocked a jimmy with his jaw. Yes, he'd nab Nat Trimble if it took him the rest of his life!

He wondered if the crook was a "cokie." This was often a fruitful hypothesis upon which to work on occasions of doubt. Murphy had solved more than one case by concentrating his attention on the city's suspected hop joints under the conviction that the desired criminal would eventually turn to their vicinity. A large percentage of the crooks of Nat Trimble's type were dope users. Murphy decided to keep his eye on Chinatown and the lower Bowery.

Several nights of such watching passed, during which Murphy discovered that he had by no means the perfect and exact picture of the crook's appearance in his mind that he had imagined. Because of this uncertainty he painstakingly trailed several men of the general description of Trimble considerable distances before positively ascertaining that there was no trace of a scar on any portion of their countenances. He even went so far as to arrest one suspect, but a fingerprint test proved his judgment absolutely erroneous. In the meantime a number of indignant citizens unfortunate enough to possess brown hair, dark eyes and a faint scar on the sides of their faces had been picked up at railroad terminals and stations and subjected to the humiliation of being fingerprinted—a procedure which resulted in several letters of protest appearing in the public prints.

Eventually Murphy gave up the "dope-head" theory and began mingling with the after-theatre crowds at the Times Square subway station in the hope that Nat would continue to augment his fortunes or gratify his instincts by lifting an occasional leather. There was, furthermore, the possibility that Trimble was celebrating his possession of ten thousand dollars by attempting to burn up Broadway. So Murphy haunted the Roaring Forties until his hopes wore threadbare.

Thus for weeks the search went on, and the weeks slid into months. The watchers had long since been removed from the vicinity of railroad stations, and there was now no certainty that the crook was still in the city, but for that matter neither had there been at any time. Murphy was too well known to the underworld for him to attempt any of the subtler forms of investigation; he was gripped with an irritating sense of futility which was added to by headquarters' impatience at his lack of success. The city was in the throes of a crime wave of particular intensity, and there were many other important cases in which Murphy's abilities might be utilized. Ultimately he was instructed to drop the search and devote his energies to the rounding up of a gang of jewelry store bandits.

But Murphy had no intention of really giving up. The blow of that jimmy had given him a "glass jaw." He resented being deprived of the opportunity of bringing Nat Trimble to justice by the scruff of the neck. This little pleasure being denied him officially, he sought for some means by which it might be accomplished outside of his regular duty. For incidental to Murphy's having a vengeful disposition, his countenance was now marked with an annoying scar which was still tender when he shaved. It was a matter of self-respect as well as of professional pride that Trimble should be caught.

He realized that there were still places which might well be investigated, certain Bowery and vicinity hangouts, dance halls, numerous gambling joints of various kinds, but to watch these would require a good deal of patience and more time.

"If I only knew somebody who for a time could follow this up for me," reflected Murphy.

He considered this for some time, running over a list of friends and acquaintances in the hope of recalling one who might be willing to undertake the case. And finally there occurred to him the name of one who, he was certain, would render him assistance.

"Just the man!" thought Murphy. "That cub reporter on the *Daily Bulletin*."

CHAPTER THREE

THAT evening, in response to a telephone call to the newspaper office, Ellis Rawlins met Murphy at police headquarters. He was a young man with plenty of intelligence, but comparatively inexperienced. What previous newspaper training he had had was gained in a small Vermont town where he had reported with great accuracy the doings of numerous social gatherings in which "500" was played and that one and all pronounced the affair a great success. His great moment had come when the town had had a genuine tar-and-feathering case, and his vivid account had been quoted by a Boston paper, which subsequently exploited the case in its Sunday magazine section. Following that, he had come to New York crude, but, as the city editor perceived, "with the stuff in him." At present he was still in the stage of development only.

"Say, Rawlins," Murphy began, "you're on a pretty enterprising paper, aren't you? Even if they do rap the department for things they don't know a damned thing about. Now don't you think if one of their reporters was the means of capturing a crook who got away with a hundred thousand dollars"—Murphy thought it would enhance the effect by stretching the sum a little—"that the paper would feature it pretty heavy for that reason?"

"Well," considered Rawlins dubiously, "that depends on who the criminal is and the sensational events leading up to the capture. Usually our paper has enough things to feature."

"But just now, with the crime wave and your paper criticizing the whole city administration, don't you think a case where it took a reporter to capture a criminal would go big?"

"Yes, I guess it would," answered Rawlins, recognizing the logic of the detective's argument.

"Sure it would. Listen to this."

Then he proceeded to inveigle Rawlins into promising to devote his off-duty evening hours to haunting certain underworld hangouts for the purpose of gleaning some information concerning Nat Trimble. Rawlins, being totally unknown to any of the crooks, would be a more effective spy and less inclined to draw suspicion than almost any detective in the department.

"And remember this," admonished Murphy as they cordially shook hands upon their agreement, "persistence will be sure to bring you success. All you've got to do is to be patient, and if you catch this bird the paper'll probably raise your salary."

So Rawlins, with much inconvenience to himself, took up the search where Murphy had left off. At Murphy's direction he made a round of underworld "joints" of the most diverse types, from Broadway cabarets to water-front dives. But subtle as were his methods and casual as were his questions, he could find nobody who would admit to the slightest knowledge of Nat Trimble. Murphy had instructed him to particularly watch out for a certain stool-pigeon from whom the detective had previously gotten what information he had concerning the crook. The stool-pigeon, however, was not to be found.

And the weeks continued to pass with not so much as the most attenuated clue to the whereabouts of the pickpocket. The city's crime wave increased to such an extent that bands of adolescent youths formed compact criminal organizations and marauded New York. Murphy found himself with less and less time to devote to Rawlins and the hunt for Trimble. But one day, left to his own devices, Rawlins encountered the stool-pigeon in a tramp lodging-house on the Bowery. A quick and loquacious friendship was formed, during which the reporter brought up quite casually the subject of Nat Trimble.

"Him? He's been goin' straight for a hell of a long time," the stool-pigeon volunteered. "Poil-divin' for a hangover lunch."

After that he shut up like a clam and Rawlins could get nothing further from him. The underworld "squealer" had become suspicious, and Rawlins, seeing this, spent some time with him in an attempt to revive his confidence. They parted in the most friendly fashion, Rawlins deciding to defer a subtler questioning until some other

meeting. But he was never able to find the stool-pigeon again, and a couple of weeks after their encounter, during which interval he had not had the opportunity to see Murphy, he called on the detective at headquarters pretty well discouraged.

"The only information I could get from the stool," he reported hopelessly, "was some stupid remark about Nat Trimble's being—let's see, what is it?—being a pearl-diver in a hangover lunch."

Murphy, balancing the chair in which he was sitting on its hind legs, almost went over backward.

"Pearl-diving, is he!" the detective roared. "Why didn't you phone me this long ago? Maybe he's gone now. In a hangover lunch, eh? Do you mean to tell me you don't know what that means—pearl-diving in a hangover lunch?"

"Can't say that I do," faltered Rawlins.

"It means that he's dishwashing in one of the Hanover lunch rooms. Oh, if he's only working there yet!"

The next day Murphy obtained a list of all the lunch rooms in question in the city, and, accompanied by Rawlins, they proceeded to make a tour of the kitchens of those eating places.

Starting in the downtown district, they found the man for whom they had been searching for four months in the third restaurant they visited, industriously swabbing dishes in a pair of tubs, one of which was filled with steaming hot, soapy water.

Trimble gave Murphy a rather startled glance as the detective triumphantly surveyed him, but did not display quite the apprehension he could have desired.

"Well, well!" commented Murphy caustically. "So we meet again, Nat Trimble. You ought to get five years at least for that ten thousand you swiped, not to mention what you're gonna get for soaking me with that jimmy."

"Have another jab on me," the dishwasher sneered. "I ain't Nat Trimble. My name is Mike Toomey. Now run away. I'm busy."

With which he again plunged his hands into the water and ignored the detective's presence.

"Getting funny, aren't you?" growled the detective. "That'll be enough of that lip. Get your hat and coat; we're going to headquarters."

"Not on your life!" protested the dishwasher. "You can't pull anything as raw as that. You can't take a guy off his job for no reason at all."

"I can't, huh?" retorted Murphy. He was about to put the dishwasher right on that point with considerable vehemence when a second consideration struck him. Taking out his nickel-plated watch, he polished its shining back with his sleeve until every mark had been removed.

"Dry your hands!" he commanded the dishwasher; "run them through your hair till they get oily and then put your thumb-prints on the back of this watch."

Glaring boldly at Murphy, the dishwasher did as he was instructed, pressing his thumbs tightly against the watch. Pulling out a card on which were the duplicates of Nat Trimble's prints, he took the watch from the dishwasher's hands preparatory to a comparison between the two. Then his smile of triumph died away and an expression of utter incredulity came into his face. Except for a slight area of dullness on the back of the watch there was no sign of a fingerprint!

Savagely Murphy seized the hands of the dishwasher and scanned the tips of his fingers. *Not an arch, loop, whorl or line was visible on the balls of the dishwasher's fingers!*

For four months of labor, working twelve hours a day, with no Sundays off, his hands continually in hot water in which was dissolved soap of devastating chemical strength, his busy fingers constantly in friction with innumerable dishes, had worn Trimble's finger balls perfectly smooth.

Dumfounded, Murphy realized that he had nothing upon which to hold Trimble. The man had been working honestly and steadily for the past four months, and the absence of fingerprints was merely incidental to the type of work he was doing. Certainly there was no criminal charge covering the case.

But here an idea occurred to Murphy. He grew suddenly affable.

"Listen, Nat," he said paternally, "I know you used to be a crook, but I'm glad to see you've reformed. You're going straight now, and that's the only way. It always makes me feel good to see a man return to the straight and narrow."

He paused, fixing his twinkling little eyes benignantly upon Trimble's face and continued:

"I always try to help such men along. Now you've got a rotten job here, but you've stuck to it, and that shows you've got the stuff in you. But I'm going to do you a good turn. I'm going to get you a job as night watchman paying twenty-five bucks a week. Think o' that. Twenty-five bucks a week!"

Trimble laughed.

"I don't know where you get that "crook" stuff, but I do know that I don't want to make no changes. I'm saving up money here so's me and my wife can take a little trip abroad after a while. To hell with any night watchman job. I'm satisfied where I am."

And he plunged his hands into the steaming water and industriously resumed washing dishes.

Murphy's scheme to restore Nat's fingermarkings was a failure, and he left the crook cursing under his breath. There was a far-away look in Nat's eyes as he watched him.

"Gertie *was* 'right," he muttered. "It pays to go straight, and as God has protected me, I'll keep my word to become a respectable man."

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I have personally noted several instances of this effect upon the fingers of dishwashers. Hence the story.

A DETECTIVE'S FIX

CORNELIUS PRICE, the Tacoma detective, whose work among the opium smugglers of Puget Sound is well known, is a great story-teller.

"Did you ever hear that I had served my time in the chain gang?" he inquired of Detective Handley one day. "No? Well, I'll give it to you so that you will get it straight.

"It was when these men were running in so much of their opium all around the Sound that I finally located some of the workers at a little landing about twenty miles from Tacoma, where there are about a dozen houses.

"My wife was there at the time visiting friends, but I did not have time to apprise her of my coming.

"I made myself up as the seediest kind of a tramp and footed it into this little place just at dusk, and nearly the first person I met was my wife. I forgot about my disguise and the effect it might have upon her.

"So I braced up, and taking her by the arm, said, 'Hello, my dear!'

"When she gave a jump and screamed I thought I had simply startled her by speaking suddenly when she wasn't expecting it, so I started to take her arm again.

"And bless me if she didn't go up the street screaming at every step.

"About that time the constable grabbed me for insulting ladies on the street, but when my wife declined to appear and prosecute they put an additional charge of vagrancy against me and locked me up in a little 'calaboose.'

"Next day I was found guilty and sentenced to eight days in the chain gang with no alternative, and I didn't dare let the officials know who I was, because I had reason to believe they were concerned in the smuggling operations.

"I sweated it out breaking rock on the road.

"But I got even.

"The justice of the peace and constable are pegging shoes in the territorial prison now for smuggling due to what I found out about them while in jail."

When a Man's Dead

By EDGAR DANIEL KRAMER

PART TWO

CHAPTER FIVE

"THE safe's empty!" Whispering told the Gray Mask.

"Why jump at conclusions?" the Gray Mask asked. "The safe may have a secret compartment. I've known of such things."

Whispering nodded, but made no move.

"The pearl is in that safe, I'm telling you," the Gray Mask insisted tartly. "Why don't you look?"

"Look yourself," Whispering replied. "I'm taking no chances."

"Very well," the Gray Mask retorted ironically, "I'll examine the safe myself. Let me have your flash."

He sank on his knees, flooded the interior of the safe with light and groped along its walls. Whispering leaned over him.

"Ah!" the Gray Mask exclaimed. "Just as I thought!"

He had touched a hidden spring and the back of the safe had collapsed. The secret compartment was jammed with papers, but cleverly concealed among them was a small leather jewel-case. The Gray Mask returned the papers to their places, closed the secret compartment and snapped the leather case open as he rose.

"The White Glory!" Whispering gasped.

From its bed of black velvet the great pearl gleamed up at them irridescently, seeming a thing alive. Shimmering with shifting colors, it appeared to breathe.

"What a beauty!" the Gray Mask ejaculated.

"And what a haul!" Whispering's practical nature asserted itself. "It's a beauty all right, but it means one sweet pile of coin to us."

"It's worth twenty thousand, if it's worth a cent," the Gray Mask spoke softly.

"Twenty thousand!"

"Of course we'll have to sacrifice it," the Gray Mask went on. "There is not a fence in the world who would give us the pearl's real value. In fact, I know only one who will even touch it. This pearl's better known than Malfero was. The risk is a big one. That's why they fight shy of it. I think we can get ten thousand on this."

"Five thousand apiece?"

"Exactly."

"Some nifty haul, chief."

"This is only the beginning," the Gray Mask chuckled.

"I'm with you," Whispering voiced his admiration, "until the crack of doom. Lead the way, chief."

Then, side by side, they stole from the apartment without as much as glancing at the unconscious Deems, a helpless huddle in the big chair.

CHAPTER SIX

WHEN Weatherly returned to his rooms in the morning he found Deems wretchedly ill, just recovering from his stupor and feebly trying to release himself. Very gently he freed the old man and carried him to bed, where he shivered under the covers like a creature with the ague.

"Anything you want?" Wetherley asked.

"Just to be let alone, sir!" Deems groaned.

"Want a doctor, Deems?"

"I feel bad enough as it is, sir."

With a wry smile Wetherley tiptoed from the room and discovered the looted safe in the library as he was hurrying to the kitchen to get some cracked ice.

"The safe in the library has been forced open," he told Deems as he hurried back with the frozen crystals tinkling in a glass.

"Huh?" Deems grunted indifferently.

"The White Glory has been stolen," Wetherley asked. "Feel strong enough to tell me, Deems?"

"You say the safe has been looted, sir?" Deems turned over to face his master with a sudden show of interest.

"The lock has been torn out."

"The master thought the world of that pearl, sir," Deems sighed. "I wonder if the dead know things that go on here. I wonder——"

"Let's forget about the dead for a while," Wetherley interrupted. "No dead man took that pearl. Let's get back to the living. What happened here last night after I went away, Deems?"

The old fellow sat up and scratched his head. Wetherley placed pillows around him and gave him some cracked ice.

"Comfortable?"

"Fine, sir, save for a splitting headache, sir!"

"What happened, Deems?"

"Well, sir, as near as I can remember," Deems spoke thoughtfully, choosing his words with the utmost deliberation, "you had been gone about an hour, sir. It was exactly an hour, sir. I remember now. You had gone out at nine and the chimes were striking ten when this thing happened, sir. I had put everything to rights, sir, and I was having nothing to do. I had just finished going through the rooms seeing that everything was just as it should be."

Wetherley was watching Deems all the time with bright, questioning eyes.

"I had returned to the library, sir," Deems went on. "I thought I would read a bit. I took a volume of Kipling from the book-case. I was thinking of your playing the master's records in the afternoon, sir."

"What happened?" Wetherley asked anxiously.

"I settled in the big leather chair by the library table, sir, and started to read," Deems answered. "The chimes finished striking ten, and I felt myself getting dowsy. I fought it off, sir, but it got me. The next thing I knew I didn't know anything."

"You just dropped off to sleep, Deems?"

"Just like that," Deems snapped his fingers. "When I wakened there I was in the big chair in the reception-hall, tied hand and foot and as sick as a dog. I didn't even know how I got there."

"You heard nothing, Deems?"

"Not a sound, sir," Deems replied disconsolately, "not even as much as a breath. I felt myself going and then—I was gone."

"Drugged?"

"Most likely, sir," Deems agreed. "Whatever it was it certainly knocked me cold. Who did it, sir?"

"That's the question, Deems."

Deems nodded.

"Better take a bit of the ice now and try to sleep," Wetherley advised, as he started for the door. "This is a case for the police and I'll notify them at once."

"I don't know about the police, sir," Deems muttered wearily. "Malfero never——"

But Wetherley was gone.

As Deems settled himself comfortably and tucked the coverlets under his chin he heard Wetherley at the telephone calling for police headquarters.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"YOU have come clean, chief. What you say goes. You sure have come clean." Whispering Cahill voiced his satisfaction as he counted over the bills which the Gray Mask handed him. "Fifteen hundred is correct."

"That's half of the three thousand I received when I handed over the pearl," the Gray Mask explained as they sped along in the gray car. "The other seven thousand will come our way when the pearl is disposed of. That will take a little time I'm afraid. I couldn't get one cent more than ten thousand."

"I'm not kicking," Whispering laughed, tucking the money into a leather bill-fold. "I'm on Easy street now. The going has been mighty rough lately. Too much police." He paused and his eyes became questioning. "How do you get away with it, chief? Aren't the bulls wise to the racket we pulled last night? Aren't they hep to the Wetherley job?"

"I suppose they are," the Gray Mask shrugged, "but that means nothing to me. That fool Wetherley would naturaly notify the cops at once. That's the very first thing he would think of. Bah! I laugh at the bulls, snap my fingers at them. I think too fast for them. They are fools. They——"

"That's Malfero's line," Whispering cut in.

"And Malfero was right!" the Gray Mask snapped.

"He always was," Whispering added.

"Except when he left his fortune to that fool Wetherley!" the Gray Mask snarled.

"What's that to you?" Whispering queried. "A man can do what he likes with his own."

"Sometimes!"

"That note you sent me was in Malfero's hand."

"What do you mean?"

"And your voice is Malfero's," Whispering mumbled. "It's creepy. You have me guessing, all right."

"But Malfero's dead!" the Gray Mask ridiculed. "And dead men are—dead men!"

"He always said he would come back to square things," Whispering sighed. "I've never known him to break his word. 'No one's ever crossed me,' he used to say in that voice like yours, 'and hell won't be deep enough to keep me from getting him who does.'"

"That's all rot!" the Gray Mask returned sharply. "You need more to do, Whispering. That's nut talk."

"But Malfero said——"

"Forget Malfero and what he said!" the Gray Mask sneered. "Chuck that stuff! Malfero's ashes now. Get your moind on other things. Are you ready for the next job?"

"Whenever you say the word, chief," Whispering replied. "But is a man dead when he's dead? That's——"

"Any more of that drivvle," the Gray Mask broke in coldly, "and I'll throw you over, Whispering. You're a good man, a very good man, but there are others. One more little job and then the big play, Whispering."

"What's the lay this time?" Whispering questioned.

"Wetherley."

"Again?"

"We'll pluck that goose right this time," the Gray Mask chuckled evilly. "That young stiff won't know what hit him. He'll have a real tale of woe for the bulls."

"Where do we pull this job?"

"Country house," the Gray Mask answered laconically.

"When?"

"To-morrow night."

"To-morrow night?"

"Yes," the Gray Mask laughed. "The pearl last night and a bigger haul to-morrow night. I'll have everything ready. That's my especial work, getting the ground ready. Be on the job, Whispering, and forget Malfero and the bulls, too. This will be big. Get this."

And the Gray Mask's voice suddenly lowered to be swallowed up in the monotonous droning of the motor.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A FINE drizzle was falling and a heavy mist enveloped everything as Whispering advanced like a stealthy shadow, pausing every few steps to listen, casting hurried glances behind him as though fearful of pursuit. He came to a little iron gate in the thick hedge and found it unlocked. He entered the grounds and moved along the drive, keeping to the grass so as to make no sound in the gravel.

"Chief says there's no one on the job here this night," he muttered as his fingers tightened upon the butts of his automatics, "but you never can tell."

He tiptoed up the long flight of stone steps to the heavy walnut doors. These, too, were unlocked.

"Too good to be true." Whispering expressed a sudden doubt. "This is altogether too damned easy."

Then he shrugged his shoulders, his teeth clicked together and he pushed into the house, which was as dark as a pocket. Using his flash discreetly, he went through the hall and up the carpeted stairway. The Gray Mask was waiting on the landing.

"The door right in front of you," the Gray Mask directed. "We have no time to lose. The coast is clear now. I've seen to that. Work quickly. The safe's in the wall at the side of the fireplace. Crack it in a hurry and we'll make a quick getaway. I can't help you, so I'll keep watch out here. Hustle!"

The house was as still as a tomb. Whispering caught no sound save the movement of his feet in the carpet and his quick breathing as he entered the room, automatic in hand. His flash showed him a long, narrow, high chamber. The ceiling was heavily paneled. Book-cases ran all around the room, lifting six feet from the floor. The walls above were covered with rich tapestries. A chandelier of bronze and glittering crystal hung over the big table in the centre of the room. Opposite the door there was a huge grate, in which logs were tumbling into embers, as if the fire had been deserted hours ago. There were great leather easy-chairs in front of the fireplace and by the table, which was piled high with magazines and books.

"No windows!" Whispering exclaimed. "No way in or out except the door. And this is where Malfero hatched his schemes that always had us guessing. Chief says that we are going to put Malfero in the shade, and from the looks of things I believe we will. Chief surely knows how to prepare the way. He says the safe's in the side of the fireplace. According to him, it's just jammed full of possibilities. Well, we'll see."

Going to the fireplace, he quickly located the strong-box built into the wall.

"Looks like the real thing," Whispering thought aloud, "but the safe isn't made that I can't crack. Here goes!"

For a time he worked the knob, seeking the combination, straining his ears to catch the click of the tumblers as they fell into place.

"Not that easy," he sighed. "I'll have to drill."

He produced his tools and set to work. Again and again he drilled. Finally he applied his clamp and the lock pulled out with a musical twanging of steel.

"Another job done!" he chuckled.

The safe was empty save for a single strip of paper.

"Curran!" Whispering read from the slip and choked. "It's Malfero's writing!"

Then the great chandelier bloomed and the room was flooded with light. Whispering got to his feet, staring around helplessly, blinking like an owl.

"Whispering Cahill!" a cold voice called.

"Malfero!" Whispering gurgled.

"Malfero," came the metallic reply.

"You are dead!" Whispering breathed.

"Yet I am here," came the mocking answer.

Whispering's eyes turned to the door. He was startled to see that it was closed.

"It's no use," the voice went on. "The door is locked. You cannot escape, Whispering."

Whispering rushed across the room and tried the door. It was locked.

"What's the game, Malfero?" he demanded.

"The old game of paying the piper," the voice droned. "You double-crossed Curran. I couldn't square things before I died. I didn't have time, but I have found a way, as you see."

"The Gray Mask," Whispering said; "who is he?"

"Can't you guess?"

"Malfero!" Whispering breathed, drawing his automatic. "You're the Gray Mask, Malfero?"

"Your gun is empty, Whispering!" the voice laughed cruelly. "I saw to that."

Whispering broke the gun, stared foolishly at its empty chambers and then hurled it across the room.

"You double-crossed Curran," Malfero's voice went on relentlessly, "and now comes the paying time. You are in a trap, Whispering Cahill. The bulls are on the stairs now. You have the White Glory on your person. For years the bulls have been trying to get something on you. They have it now. Curran died up the river. Now you are going up for a sweet long spell. Perhaps you will die there, too, as Curran did. In selling out Curran you sold me. It has taken a long time, Whispering, but I've got you at last. I've kept my word."

Then the room was crowded with sneering laughter.

"Trapped by a dead man!" Whispering Cahill choked and tore at his throat as he swayed drunkenly, staggered forward and crumpled on the floor.

Then a key grated harshly in the lock and a squad of bluecoats burst into the room, followed by Wetherley and Deems.

CHAPTER NINE

WHEN the officers had taken Whispering Cahill away a broken and whimpering thing, when Deems had left the room to attend to other duties, Wetherley tossed new logs into the fire and stood staring at the blaze for a time. With an expression of distaste he took a pair of gray gloves and a gray mask, all of silk, from an inner pocket and dropped them into the flames.

"Though Whispering Cahill is getting exactly what he deserves," Wetherley sighed, "this job has not been altogether a pleasant one for me. With my voice like Malfero's and my writing, too, it was easy to play upon Whispering's superstitious nature and then arouse both his curiosity and his greed. I had to rob myself of the White Glory in order to pull a stunt that was worth while and big enough to make him believe in me. His cupidity made him easy. I had to drug Deems, and he had one wretched time, the poor old fellow. The police knew of the pearl's disappearance. After we planned to-night's stunt it was simple to notify the cops anonymously that they could nab Whispering here to-night. Planting the White Glory on him was no trouble at all, and there was really nothing to exchanging guns with him. After years and years the authorities have finally landed Whispering. They have the goods on him now and it will go hard with him. I led him on and on and turned him over to the bulls. This is Whispering Cahill's finish. The poor devil!"

Wetherley settled in a chair by the table. He took the little, black-leather memorandum-book from his pocket, opened it very deliberately and read in a low voice:

"Whispering Cahill, expert safe-cracker —none better—superstitious with a streak of fatalism—would do anything for money —fears me living or dead—sold out Dave Curran—teamed up on a job with Curran and then tipped off the bulls for coin—Curran was sent up the river and died in prison —Curran's daughter, never realizing her dad was a crook, died of a broken heart— Whispering Cahill killed them both—give him a big dose of his own medicine."

Wetherley lifted his eyes from the little book and gazed into the crackling fire for a long time.

"Give him a big dose of his own medicine," he murmured. "Well, Whispering Cahill's surely got it."

Then at the foot of the page in Malfero's striking hand Wetherley wrote the one word, "Closed."

The End

A new serial begins in the next number

"The House Where Dead Men Dwell"

By FREDERICK C. DAVIS

A Waterproof Clue

By J. B. WARRENTON

RUMBLING thunder and vivid flashes of sinister lightning, followed by an ominous snarling and moaning of the wind. Then came a downpour. Light at first, it pattered over the thirsty earth, which drank it greedily. Then in swirling sheets it gushed from above until even the branches of the trees bowed before the deluge.

Braving the rushing torrents, a taxicab came to a stop before the residence of Coleman Nashvill. A tall, lean figure, his topcoat collar turned up around his neck, leaped from the car. There in the swirling, driving sheet of rain he fished a bill from his pocket.

"Keep the change," he mumbled, turning on his heel and dashing up the steps, and the taxi driver touched his cap and drove off.

A minute later, almost simultaneously with another peal of thunder, came a muffled roar from within the house, then silence.

Within that beautiful dwelling, amid costly furnishings and priceless treasures, a tragedy had occurred.

Face downward on the polished floor lay the body of Coleman Nashvill. A few short minutes before he had rushed lightly up the steps; now he was an inert, shapeless mass, past all earthly aid.

Kneeling beside the body was another form. This figure was in strong contrast to the dead man. Flashily clad in checks, he had a peaked face, with rat-like eyes to match, and a diminutive body with twitching, shrunken shoulders, which bespoke the narcotic addict.

A third figure in the scene was leaning weakly against the wall near an old-fashioned safe. He was tall and heavy, with a bullet head and closely cropped hair, on which sat a visored cap such as chauffeurs wear.

"Gawd, Snuffy!" he gasped hoarsely. "I didn't mean fer youse t' croak him. Whatcha gonna do now, eh? Yo' hophead, you've got me in a fine fix!"

The man called Snuffy arose from the floor. In one hand he balanced lightly a small automatic revolver. His ratty eyes were pin-points. His lips were curled back in a snarl.

"Can dat chatter," he hissed, his claw-like hand tightening on the tiny weapon. "You'll keep him company if yo' yip again. T'ink I wuz gonna let him bean me wid dat chair? Didn't yo' say you took him t' de station an' he was beatin' it fer de coast? Yo' framed dis job an' yo've gotta see it through. You're yeller! But lemme slip yo' somepin. We've gotta make dis ting snappy; get that? If I go t' de hoosgow, yo' go, too. Den it's de big sizzle at Warble-Twice-on-de-Hudson fo' me, an', believe me, bo, *yo'* won't be one o' de mourners. Come alive now, an' keep your glims peeled; I've gotta open dis box."

The scathing rebuke had an animating effect on the chauffeur—for Dick Wheeler was employed in that capacity by the slain man—whose teeth snapped shut with a click as he turned towards the window. The storm had spent itself, and now the world around was bathed in the warm rays of the dazzling sun.

For the next twenty minutes an electric drill droned and sung merrily as it bit into the hardened steel of the ancient safe. Not too ancient to be equipped with a modern combination dial, but somewhat out of date for one of Coleman Nashvill's taste.

"Ah," expressed Snuffy as the dial laid in

his hand. He mopped his face with a handkerchief. Next he delved into his pocket and brought forth a tiny packet. This he opened, disclosing a white powder, which he sprinkled on the back of his hand, twitchingly snuffed it into his dilated nostrils, then turned to finish his work. The rest was easy, and soon the contents was lying on the table between themen.

"'Bout one thousin smackers," inventoried Snuffy, spreading the loot about before them. "Ice 'bout twenty, and de rest o' de junk'll bring a few thou more. Not a big haul t' croak a bird fer."

"Now whatcha gonna do?" asked Wheeler.

"Whatcha mean—do?"

Both crooks glared at one another across the table.

"Gonna split here?" growled the Judas chauffeur.

"Thought yo' were gonna stay here an' pass th' buck."

"Yo' won't double-cross me if I do, will ya?" Wheeler queried. His tone carried a tinge of mistrust.

"Naw," snarled Snuffy. "Take your split an' hide it. De bulls'll be poppin' like blazes 'round here soon; den dey'll dig it up. You're a wise guy, Bull, I don't think. Yo've gotta stay here and play safe. Now lissen."

For several moments Snuffy talked and talked fast. Bull gripped the edge of the table and listened doggedly. His eyes roved from the murderer's face to the loot on the table, then back again. The crook speaking was delineating a good alibi for Bull, if he could muster up the courage to carry it through. He must, that was all there was to it, or the chair at Sing Sing awaited him.

"An' den, when I do de job up fine, yo' can spell dat story," concluded Snuffy with a flourish of oratory.

"Sounds good," Wheeler voiced reluctantly. "Where'll I meet yer?"

"Yen Lee's joss shop," said Snuffy. "I'll lay low till I see yo'. Come on now an' let's have it over wid."

They left the house by the rear door, [illegible]ding and skulking along by the hedge which skirted the walk, until they reached the garage.

"Well, here we are," grinned Snuffy malignantly; "got anyt'ing t' say before I start de job?"

"Aw, shut up," growled Wheeler; "don't rub it in, even if I've gotta be th' goat. Go ahead an' have it over. Go as far as yo' like."

Snuffy went ahead by fiercely attacking his ingrate accomplice. Bruised and bleeding, one eye swollen and discolored, the chauffeur lay on the cement floor when the assault was over. Strong ropes were handy, and Wheeler was treated to the best job of hog-tieing that he ever experienced in his whole life.

"I ought t' croak de big mutt," grated Snuffy, kicking the prostrate form on the shin for good measure. "De white-livered stiff. Oh, yeah, he'll get a split, I don't t'ink. Ta-ta."

When Bull Wheeler wafted back to his senses the first thing he spied with the only eye he could open was the car on the garage floor. His head throbbed, and when he tried to move he could not suppress an audible groan of pain. A greasy rag, which sufficed for a gag, nauseated him. Wiggle, strain and roll as he might, the wrapping around him remained intact. His whole body was bathed in a moisture of clammy sweat. Inwardly he cursed himself for the fool he was beginning to think he was. He had taken the job as chauffeur for the sole purpose of making a clean-up. Knowing nothing about safes—he specialized in stick-ups, strong-arm stuff and getting a lay—he took Snuffy Cogen in on a fifty-fifty split. He never intended the dope fiend to use his gun, not that he had any scruples himself about wielding a sapstick, brass knuckles or any other weapon, but the little green door which ended in a grave of quicklime was the dominant preventive.

Now Snuffy was well out of the way with the loot, while he, trussed up like a fowl, every bone in his huge body aching, must stand the grilling of a flock of headquarters bulls. They would try to pin the crime on him if they could. But first of all he must get help.

Another struggle with the bonds was as futile as the first. They never so much as bulged. Snuffy was some little binder; Bull thought so, anyhow. He finally managed by much masticating and squirming of his bullet head to get rid of the filthy rag. Then rolling his body to the double doors, he kicked them open with a drive of his bound feet.

Pat Scully, gardener on a near-by estate, heard his cries and rushed to his aid. When Bull was untied and assisted to his feet he could hardly stand. His right leg buckled under him, and it was with much difficulty he hobbled after Scully, who headed toward the house after hearing the story of the attack.

Horrified at the discovery of the crime, Scully tremblingly phoned the police. Bull began bemoaning the death of his employer and swearing vengeance on the slayer.

Two uniformed policemen and a doctor were the first to arrive.

"Dead for nearly an hour," was the medical man's verdict; "the bullet passed clean through his body, piercing the heart in its flight, and came out under the left shoulder-blade. The bullet was from a small calibre revolver—a twenty-two probably."

He arose after his hurried examination and turned to the policeman.

"Murder has been done," he announced crisply, "and I would suggest that police headquarters be notified and an officer sent here at once."

Ten minutes later Detective Hugh Ross was in charge. He heard the doctor's verdict and also Pat Scully's narrative of the part he played in it. Bull Wheeler also poured out his verbal concoction of the affair as follows:

He had returned to the garage with his car shortly before noon, after he had taken Mr. Nashvill to the railroad station, where he intended boarding a train for the Coast. Wheeler hurried back so that he would not be overtaken by the impending storm, and knowing that the cook was away and would not return until late in the afternoon, he concluded to wash his car and take lunch when she returned. He had just pulled on a pair of rubber boots when he heard a slight noise behind him. Springing to his feet, he turned, only to look into the business end of an automatic revolver in the hand of a masked man. What could he do? The hand that grasped the gun was steady, and the crook's voice was steadier when it ordered:

"Face about! I'm gonna tie you up. Steady, now; I don't want an audience when I open that sardine can up at the house."

Bull waxed feverish and went on to tell how, enraged at the thought of his kind employer being robbed, disregarding his own peril, he sprang upon the hold-up man, knocking the gun from his hand and going to the mat with him in a deadly struggle.

He described the encounter as terrific. How they rolled about the floor, gasping, cursing and striving for the mastery. He told of the other's superior strength and knowledge of rough-and-tumble fighting. After he had nearly been battered to a pulp he strove to call for help. He received a smashing blow on the point of the jaw, and that was the last thing he remembered until he recovered consciousness, when Scully came to his aid.

All through the story Detective Ross gazed out the window, where beneath lay the uprooted tree.

Aroused by the silence, as the chauffeur terminated his version of the tragedy, the detective turned slowly and looked down at Wheeler. His appearance certainly was honest enough. Ross's eyes were thoughtful as he gazed at the man's battered hulk. Something vaguely familiar about his bruised features was seeping through his mind and taking on shape.

"What did you say your full name was?" inquired the detective, standing before Wheeler.

"I tol' yo' once it was Griffen—George Griffen," the chauffeur said in a surly tone. He did not fancy the way Ross looked at him and asked him to reiterate his name.

"Griffen—Griffen," ruminated the headquarters man, "I thought you said Wheeler. My mistake."

Bull squirmed in the chair. What a fool he was. Why did he not run for it when Snuffy did? This dick was a wise guy.

Several years had passed since Wheeler escaped from Sing Sing. Ross was not a member of the department then. He must bluff it through at any cost. He could not make a run for it if he tried. His right leg, he was sure, was badly damaged.

"Was your assailant a big man?" The detective was now towering over the chauffeur-crook.

"Why—yeah," stammered Bull, "pretty big."

"Masked?"

"Yeah."

"Umph!"

Silence reigned for a few seconds before Ross spoke again.

"You say you didn't enter the house until now, after coming home with the car?"

"Dat's what," answered Bull laconically.

The detective turned from Wheeler and walked up and down the floor. Stopping in his stride, he bent before the open safe. Closing the door, he carefully examined the smooth surface.

"Gloves," he grunted. "No chance for finger——"

He stopped short.

"Ah!"

An abrasion on the enameled surface near the top of the safe, just over the door, held his gaze. He smiled grimly as he circled his finger over the mark. Then he stood erect and walked to the window again. There he carefully searched the surface of the casing and the wall about it. His quest apparently was futile, for he shook his head slowly and turned to Wheeler.

"Get up here till I look you over," Ross ordered. "I've a hunch that your name is Bull Wheeler, and I want to see if there's anything on your person that you wouldn't like me to see. Get up!"

Bull chuckled inwardly as he painfully arose. Anticipating trouble, he had attended to all of that. There was nothing in his pockets but a handkerchief and a few no-account letters addressed to George Griffen. He was now on his feet and facing the headquarters man.

"Turn around," commanded Ross.

Bull turned halfway; then with a cry he sank to the floor.

"My leg! My ankle!" he whined. "It's broken."

The detective beckoned the policeman, who assisted him into the chair.

"Doctor," called Ross, "look at this man's leg. He says it's broken."

"Sure," responded the medical man. "Pull off his rubber boot."

This to the policeman.

Groaning, Bull raised his right leg. Carefully one of the officers drew off the rubber boot. As he turned to cast it aside something rolled from within it onto the hardwood floor.

So engrossed was he with his pains Bull failed to notice it. The policemen and the doctor likewise failed to see the object. Not so with Detective Ross. While the swollen member was being cared for, he stooped quickly and picked up the thing which lay near the table. An intake of breath and a low whistle was the result of his find as he critically held it between his fingers.

"Feel better?" Ross inquired, again standing before Bull.

The doctor had finished his job and was making ready to depart.

"Yeah," the crook nodded; then he added: "If you're through wid me I wish one of yo' gents would gimme a lift t' my room. I'm all shot t' ther devil."

"Surest thing you know," agreed Ross grimly, "but first I want to ask you another question. Who fired the shot that killed Nashvill, Bull Wheeler?"

With a snarl the chauffeur-crook half arose, only to settle back again with a curse. He glared up at the headquarters man, who was boring him with his steely eyes.

"I tol' yo I wasn't in de house, didn't I?" he snarled. His face was ashy now, and he licked his dry lips as he avoided meeting Ross's searching gaze.

"You're a liar, Wheeler!" snapped the detective. "Come clean now or, you dirty crook, I'll send you to the chair."

"I tell yo' I wasn't in here till just now."

The detective nodded to the policemen.

"Lock him up, boys; I'll trail along after you. He's an escaped con from Sing Sing and an accessory, if not the real murderer, of Coleman Nashvill. He'll talk——"

Like an enraged beast, Bull arose to his feet, leaning heavily on the back of the chair.

"Blast you, Ross, you're tryin' t' frame me," he choked, struggling, despite his injuries, with the two officers who had taken a firm hold on him when ordered to by the detective. "I know I crushed out up de river, but I——"

"Shut up, Bull, and hold your wind for the jury," smiled the headquarters man. "I don't know who your pal was, but I'll tell you how it happened. I ain't saying but what you intended washing the car when you come back from the railroad station. You put on those rubber boots for that purpose. But before you got started your pal, with whom you had arranged to commit the robbery, showed up sooner than you expected. I can't say whether the shot was fired before or after Mr. Nashvill surprised you fellows robbing him. But you're in it as deep as the murderer who fired the shot, Wheeler; so don't forget that."

The detective paused for a moment to watch the result of his words. Bull never as much as batted his uninjured eye. He opened his mouth to speak, but seemingly changed his mind and snapped it shut with a wicked click of his teeth.

"Very well," said Ross nonchalantly, "if you don't help me out I'll have to tell you the rest. Nashvill must have started for your pal with some improvised weapon—a chair very likely. The dirty coward fired a shot at close range, which went clean through his victim's body. The bullet struck the safe over the door and, nearly spent, richochetted from there to where *you* were standing at the window and dropped into the yawning opening at the top of your ***right*** rubber boot."

"It's a lie!" yelled Bull. "A frame-up! You can't prove it! You—— God!"

The detective was holding his find before the crook's eye—*a flattened lead bullet.*

"That dropped from your boot when Officer Nelson pulled it off," accused Ross. "Now will you let your pal enjoy the spoils, while you walk between two guards into a dimly lit room where a chair——"

"Stop! Stop!" shrieked the prisoner, throwing himself on his knees and groveling between the two policemen who had him in custody. "That's how it happened! I didn't figger on Snuffy Cogen using a gat. I——"

"Take him away, boys," ordered Ross. "I'll bring Snuffy in before dark. I knew Bull was mixed up in it somehow, and concluded to turn him loose, then trail him, until he led me to the murderer. But when the bullet hopped out of its waterproof hideout I then knew I held the major clue to the whole thing."

6,200 MILES A SECOND

ELECTRONS, the ultimate division of matter so far as known, rushed through a tube at a speed of 6,200 miles a second and were made visible through an oscillograph in demonstrations before the convention of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers recently.

The oscillograph is a glass bulb containing a tube similar to the radio vacuum tube, from the hot filament of which electrons were hurled off. A thin glass pipe caught some of the electrons and projected them on a small chemically prepared screen within the bulb, where the electrons appeared as dancing specks of light. They were moved, as a boy might play a stream of water against a wall, either by the magnetic effect of a current passed through a coil outside or by the electric effect of a voltage applied between pairs of plates within the bulb.

J. B. Johnson of the Western Electric Company invented the tube, which adapts the principle of a German scientist, Prof. Braun, developed thirty years ago. The commercial value of the oscillograph lies in exploring electric currents and detecting trouble.

A Hold-Up

WHILE Police Commissioner Enright was at the dinner of police lieutenants in the Waldorf the other night receiving something else was going on in another part of the town.

With a coolness that the police said was born of drugs, three young men held up the Heights Pharmacy, conducted by Dr. Abraham N. Horowitz, at St. Nicholas avenue and 145th street, New York City, serving customers in expert fashion and finally escaping with everything in the way of cash the store contained.

It was shortly after 9 o'clock when the three young men entered the store, set amid a number of large apartment houses. Two of them proceeded down the store to where David Neuberger, clerk, waited for them behind the counter. The third halted just outside the door at the top of the steps leading to the cellar, where Dr. Horowitz was getting some drugs for a prescription he was filling.

The two talked business to Neuberger for a time, and then when Dr. Horowitz, bearing the drugs, came up from the basement, the third man, who was later to prove a rather good drug clerk himself, and the two others produced .38-calibre automatic pistols. The pharmacist and his assistant were escorted into the back room, and the robbers bound the druggist and Neuberger, tying them together back to back. Then the leader removed $300 in cash from Dr. Horowitz's pocket and a gold watch and chain. Going through the pockets of the clerk, however, they found only the small sum of 45 cents.

Leaving two men to guard the two prisoners, the leader went into the store and behind a counter. At that moment Dr. E. Siegel and his wife, friends of Dr. Horowitz, drove up in their automobile. Leaving Mrs. Siegel in the car, Dr. Siegel ran in to say a few words to his friend, but he encountered the man behind the counter.

"Where is 'Doc'?" Dr. Siegel asked.

"Back there, making up a prescription," said the "clerk."

Dr. Siegel hurried back of the screen and faced two pistols. He was tied up and his pocketbook yielded $38. Then came a customer, A. Bach, of 695 St. Nicholas avenue. He was covered by the "clerk's" revolver, which was kept under the counter, and escorted back and $170 was taken from him. Bach was not bound, but the pistols of the two men were kept pointed at him.

Next a woman entered and asked for a tube of vaseline.

"I'm awfully sorry," the "clerk" said, "but we are just out of that. We'll have some to-morrow. Won't this do?"

The woman refused to accept the substitute and went out. Then came a young man who wanted a pint of ice cream. The robber scooped it out of the container and wrapped it up.

The "clerk" was ringing up this "sale" when another woman entered. She wanted the prescription she had left, and produced the numbered slip.

"Hey, Doc," said the "clerk," "where's this prescription"—giving the number—"is it ready?"

It was, the pharmacist confessed, with the guns in action, and the "clerk" picked it up from its place on the side of the counter and rang up $1.20. Then he cleaned out the cash register, getting $80.

he went back and asked Dr. Horowitz whether he had any "coke." The pharmacist said he didn't keep it and the three robbers then went leisurely out the front door.

Mrs. Siegel, in the car, saw the three go out and enter a taxicab half a block away, which speeded up St. Nicholas avenue.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

1 "The Eel Man," by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack," by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
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135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
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137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.

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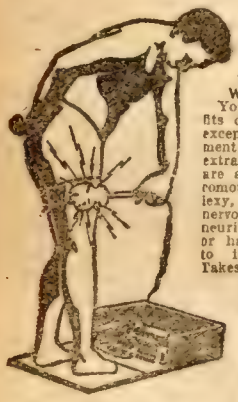

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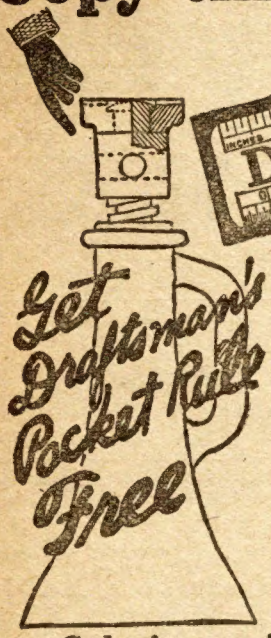

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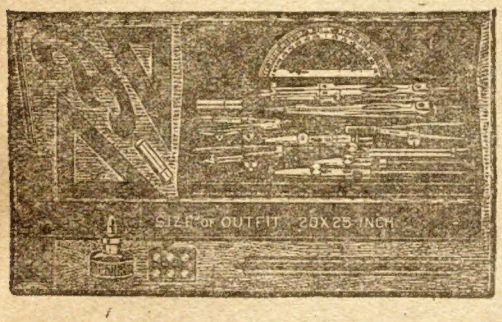

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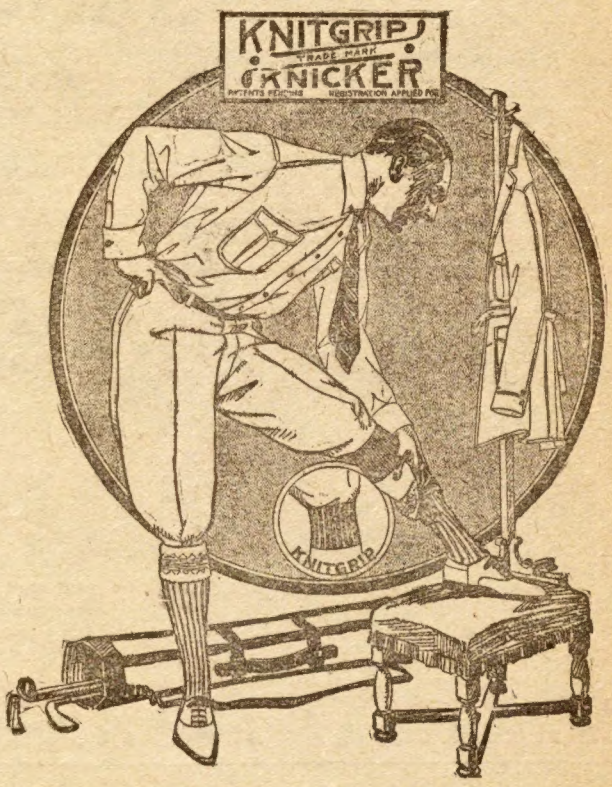

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